DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 251 832 CS 208 662

AUTHOR McLeod, Alan M., Ed.
TITLE Literature and Its Teaching.
INSTITUTION Virginia Association of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 68p.; The Virginia Association of Teachers of English is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Virginia English Bulletin; v34 n2 Win 1984

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Literature; Content Area Reading; Elementary Secondary Education; English Literature; Fiction; Humor; *Learning Activities; *Literature Appreciation; Poetry; *Reader Response; Reading Interests; Science Fiction; Student Participation; *Teaching Methods; *United States Literature

ABSTRACT

This theme issue of the "Virginia English Bulletin" focuses on "Literature and Its Teaching." The 15 major articles are: "Response to Literature" (Robert C. Small and Ruth Fisher); "The Power of a Good Book" (Gayle Sterrett); "Some Plain Truths about Teaching English" (Coalition of English Associations); "Introducing High School Students to William Faulkner" (Elizabeth Haynes Burnett); "Struggle for Control in Adolescent Literature" (Judy Baxter); "Reflection, Problem-Solving and Discussion in Teaching Literature" (Charles R. Duke); "Metaphor: A Literary Device and More" (Edgar H. Thompson); "The 'Alice' Books" (Pepper Worthington); "Mathematics in Literature: 'The Phantom Tollbooth'" (Ena Gross); "'A Farewell to Arms' for the Post-Vietnam Generation" (Eric Hibbison); "Aesthetic Experiences: Drawing, Writing, Teaching Literature" (John W. Swope); "Teaching and Writing Poetry" (Michael Segedy); "Fantasy and Science Fiction" (Emily J. Wood); "War, Literature, and the Adolescent" (David Dolde); and "Using Virginia Locales for Literature Study" (Kathleen Mahoney). In addition, the journal contains suggestions for teaching "Great Expectations," "Treasure Island," "Flowers for Algernon," "I Am the Cheese," "Walden," and "Sounder." (FL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Alan M. McLeod
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED251832

CS208662

VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN

VATE

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH WINTER 1984

Virginia English Bulletin

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF
THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
AND LANGUAGE ARTS

ALAN M. MCLEOD, *Editor*
JOHN S. OEHLER, *Business Manager*
School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, VA 23284

Editorial Board

PATRICIA DUNCAN (1985)
Virginia Commonwealth University
ELLEN GRIFFIN (1985)
Henrico County Schools
SHARON HARRIS (1984)
Albemarle County; column editor
DAISY REED (1984)
Virginia Commonwealth Univ.
CHARLOTTE SELLERS (1984)
Blacksburg High School
ROBERT C. SMALL (1985)
Virginia Tech

MANUSCRIPTS:

The Editorial Board of the *Virginia English Bulletin* welcomes contributions related to the teaching of language arts and English at all school levels, especially manuscripts of 3-8 pages on announced focus. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double-spaced, and submitted in duplicate. Footnotes should rarely be used. Deadlines for copy are October 1 and February 1. Include self-addressed, stamped return envelopes. Authors should include name, school, position, courses taught. The editor reserves the right to modify manuscripts to fit length and language considerations.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING:

Subscription is included in the annual membership dues of $10.00. Student dues are $2.00. Single copies are $4.00. Membership is for the calendar year. For advertising rates, contact the Business Manager (see above).

Published twice annually by the Virginia Association of Teachers of English Language Arts, a non-profit affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a Department of the Virginia Education Association. The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of VATE.

Reproduction of material from this publication is hereby authorized if (a) reproduction is for educational use in not-for-profit institutions; (b) copies are made available without charge beyond the cost of reproduction; and (c) each copy includes full citation of the source.

MEMBER OF NCTE INFORMATION EXCHANGE AGREEMENT

PRINTED BY WHITTET & SHEPPERSON, RICHMOND

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 2 WINTER 1984

FOCUS: Literature and Its Teaching

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

Two Stacks Later: Literature and Its Teaching 2
ALAN M. MCLEOD

Review: Experiencing Children's Literature 3
MARY BRITTAIN (Virginia Commonwealth University)

Response to Literature 4
ROBERT C. SMALL and RUTH FISHER (Virginia Tech)

The Power of a Good Book 10
GAYLE STERRETT (Northumberland Middle)

Some Plain Truths About Teaching English 11
Coalition of English Associations, 1984

Introducing Students to William Faulkner 12
ELIZABETH BURNETT (University of South Carolina)

Struggle for Control in Adolescent Literature 18
JUDY BAXTER (Newport News Schools)

Reflection, Problem Solving and Discussion in Teaching Literature 24
CHARLES R. DUKE (Utah State University)

Metaphor: A Literary Device and More 30
EDGAR H. THOMPSON (Blacksburg High)

The *Alice* Books 33
PEPPER WORTHINGTON (Mount Olive College, North Carolina)

Mathematics in Literature: *The Phantom Tollbooth* 37
ENA GROSS (Virginia Commonwealth University)

A Farewell to Arms 40
ERIC HIBBISON (J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College)

Aesthetic Experiences 44
JOHN W. SWOPE (Lansing Community College, Michigan)

Teaching and Writing Poetry 47
MICHAEL SEGEDY (Lima, Peru)

Fantasy and Science Fiction 51
EMILY WOOD (College of William & Mary, student)

War, Literature, and the Adolescent 52
DAVID DOLDE (College of William & Mary, student)

Using Virginia Locales for Literature Study 54
KATHLEEN MAHONEY (Drew Middle, Stafford County)

Great Teaching Ideas: Literature and Its Teaching 56
SHARON HARRIS (Albemarle County Schools)

With *Great Expectations*, Betsy Murray (Chesterfield) 56
A Coded Message from *Treasure Island*, Mary Burman (Wyoming) . 57
Flowers for Algernon, Nancy Miller (Chesterfield) 58
Teaching Thoreau, Ray Goss (Chesterfield) 58
I Am the Cheese, Michael Segedy (Virginia Beach) 58
A Reader's Delight, Steven Stout (Chesterfield) 59

Review: WHIMSY II: Humor and Metaphor 59
ALAN M. MCLEOD

The New Realism in Children's Literature 60
MARGARET MIER (ERIC/RCS)

TWO STACKS LATER: Literature and Its Teaching

Alice W. McLeod

We are concerned about communication and the use of language: language as it is used orally and in written form, language as it has been expressed by writers of different generations, cultures, and points of view. This issue of the *Bulletin* looks at literature and its teaching; literature, the written expression of people living and dead, which captures the human condition.

When I was a student in secondary schools, literature study tended to be organized in two primary formats: chronological and genre. The chronological approach set an historical context for the pieces of literature that we studied, but it was limited by focus on the specific influences of the period in which a selection was written. The genre approach organized literature conveniently, but it seduced teachers toward a focus on literature as craft—literary conventions, definitions, and details of analyzing the writer's skill. Neither approach looked at literature as it reflects the human condition; rarely did either approach take into account reader interest—frequently in plot or action—as it examined the author's biography or style.

We have known that reading any piece of literature is an individual experience; that the reader brings to any work his or her own values, attitudes, and experiences. Yet we have equated appreciation of literature, and thus our expectations of readers, with aesthetic satisfaction, a satisfaction that accrues to the sophisticated reader—often after extended laboring with the piece of literature. We have valued critical comments for analysis of what a piece of literature may be. That is not the case for many (relatively unsophisticated) readers in schools. We need to help them learn that literature can speak to an individual, informing that individual's life and ways in which it may be lived.

The selections in this issue examine responding to literature, what a good book is for one individual, kinds of questions one needs to ask while reading, strategies for involving students with literature, and various aspects of fiction and poetry which appeal to individuals in schools or colleges. From the salient work of Rosenblatt, to the specific offerings of Hemingway, Faulkner, science fiction, literature for adolescents, literature for children, literature about war, or literature set in Virginia locales, there is literature which can appeal to many of the students with whom we work. The articles here attempt to help us discover ways in which we can involve our students more meaningfully with literature; literature which informs our lives and theirs, literature which helps us reflect on the human condition.

Literature is where we find out about ourselves and others: individual feeling and response; it is about my distinctness and the distinctness of others; it is an opportunity to discover ourselves—the mind as it meets the work. The realm of literature is vast, and no one work (or

interpretation) should be expected to appeal to all individuals, nor should we expect all student readers to be sophisticated. Individuals respond to a given work in a different manner; their maturity as readers evolves individually. Our responsibility is to help—not thwart—that maturation.

Review

Alan C. Purves and Dianne L. Monson. *Experiencing Children's Literature*, Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983. Reviewed by Mary M. Brittain

Experiencing Children's Literature bears a marked resemblance to a companion volume released last year by Scott, Foresman, *A Guide to Literature for Young Adults* by Ruth Cline and William McBride. Both books are paperback, shorter than the traditional literature text, and intended primarily as university classroom texts, but would appeal to broader audiences such as teachers, librarians, media specialists, psychologists and social workers.

Experiencing Children's Literature, however, has a different focus than its counterpart in adolescent literature. The book is based squarely upon one approach to the teaching of children's literature, Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory. Chapters One and Five are devoted to an exploration of this theory and to the way in which the child functions in the literary transaction.

Three of the book's seven chapters focus on children's literature itself: folk tales, popular literature, myths, factual and fanciful prose, poetry and picture books. The grouping of genre is idiosyncratic: pairing picture books with poetry is unusual but the authors make an impressive case for combining them because of the common elements in poetry and art. The last two chapters deal with book selection and evaluation and with the design and evaluation of literature programs for children.

The authors maintain that "any piece of writing or pictorial narrative may potentially be considered as literature." To this end they have included a goodly amount of material not usually emphasized in literature texts; e.g. series books and comics. Interesting suggestions for incorporating these into a literature program are offered.

In so short a children's literature text, obviously something had to be omitted. What the authors have left out are the pages and pages of summaries and annotations of children's books that are found in the usual instructional tome. While these are useful in helping students decide whether or not they want to read an entire book, the approach used by Purves and Monson has the merit of ensuring that the student does not stop with the summary itself. The book does provide unannotated bibliographies for all the genres noted. These are varied and up-to-date. Every chapter ends with suggested exercises for students that are appealing and well thought out.

Experiencing Children's Literature shows great respect for the child as an intelligent, responsive reader and for the teacher as an agent of growth. Purves and Monson have produced a readable, manageable book that this reviewer found engaging enough to order as the text for a children's literature course next semester.

Mary Brittain is associate professor of reading at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Research Column: Response to Literature

Robert C. Small, Jr. and Ruth Ferris

Literature is the only art form that all secondary school students are required to study. When those of us who teach it are challenged to explain why, we can usually come up with a respectable list of justifications: cultural heritage, advanced reading skills, insights into the thoughts of others. An important part of anyone's list of reasons for the study of literature is surely "response": we want to permit, encourage, enhance, expand, and deepen response to literature by our students. Wanting to do so is probably a major reason why we became English teachers.

Fortunately, we are rarely challenged to explain what we mean by "response to literature" and to describe how we go about influencing it. In recent years, teachers and students of literature have tried in systematic ways to answer questions about response. Much of what they have found is helpful, though their findings go a long way toward discrediting the traditional way of teaching literature.

What Is Response to Literature? Response to literature occurs when readers, using their own fund of experience, react to words on a page to reconstruct the story those words tell. Years ago, Rosenblatt explained what was happening by saying:

> The process of understanding a work implies a recreation of it, an attempt to grasp completely all the sensations and concepts through which the author seeks to convey the quality of his sense of life. Each of us must make a new synthesis of these elements with his own nature, but it is essential that he assimilate those elements of experience which the author has actually presented (Rosenblatt, 1938:133).

"With his own nature"—that was her key phrase. A number of researchers from fields as diverse as psychology, reading, and literary criticism have supported this view. Through their research, they have come to see responding to a work of literature as a process in which readers draw on what they know and feel and on their moral and social attitudes in order to establish a dialogue between themselves and the writer, or, in Rosenblatt's view, between themselves and the work. The experiences and attitudes of each reader are different from those of all other readers. Consequently, the responses of each reader to a poem or short story will also be different from the responses of every other reader.

I. A. Richards was one of the first to report on research related to student responses to literature. He discovered, somewhat to his own surprise, that readers often have very individual responses to works of literature if they are not told what the works mean (Richards, 1929). Studies like Richards' clearly show the influence of individual experience

on student response, but Richards did not choose to pursue further the nature and causes of individual differences in response. Others who followed him did, however. Nevertheless, the belief that every literary work had one true meaning seems to have predominated despite Rosenblatt's early efforts to persuade us otherwise.

In 1972, when Purves and Beach reviewed studies in response to literature, they found that little research had been done on the relationship of cognitive factors and psychological factors to responses to literature. They did report that readers (1) who were interested in a text had a better understanding of it, (2) have a tendency to assign to characters values that those characters were not given by the author, (3) form mental pictures of characters when physical descriptions are not given, (4) give likeable traits and attitudes to characters they like although the writer had not portrayed these traits, and (5) moral judgments of characters reflect projections of the readers' attitudes towards their own friends more than their own abstract moral positions (Purves and Beach, 1972:5-19). Consequently, Beach summarized the research in response to reading during the past two decades as supporting the following:

> *(1) readers respond in a highly unique manner to works;*
> *(2) the same reader responds differently to different works;*
> *(3) differences in the reader's responses are due to difference in readers' personality, sex, literary training, age, reading ability, cognitive development, and other characteristics (Beach, 1979:132-33).*

Even as late as 1979, then, we did not know very much about response to literature except that it is personal and that it often strays from the text.

Earlier, however, David Bleich had concluded from his research that responses occur when "Certain feelings sensed earlier in the life of the individual as valuable but not accessible to him are released under the influence of literary involvement and applied to present life-conditions." Bleich suggested that examining these feelings enables the individual to grow: "That is, his sense of self actually enlarges as a result of this kind of insight" (1969:45). This idea, like the even earlier one of Rosenblatt, was apparently ahead of its time. Some years later, however, Adams and Bruce concurred:

> *The text will provide clues with respect to the beliefs, plans, and goals of its characters, but their elaboration and their relationship to the events, structure, and message of the story as a whole will be left to the inferential processes of the reader (Adams and Bruce, 1982: 11-12).*

What Kinds of Responses Do Readers Have? Another way of looking at the subject of response to literature is to try to categorize the types of responses readers have and to see which kinds are most common. In

1964, Squire examined tapes of student responses and discovered that they could be placed in one of seven categories:

1. Literary judgments,
2. Interpretational responses,
3. Narrational reactions,
4. Associational responses,
5. Self-involvement,
6. Prescriptive judgments,
7. Miscellaneous (Squire, 1964: 17-18).

He found that the dominant form of response among his students was interpretational for both sexes. Oddly enough, he also found that response was "generally unrelated to the intelligence and reading ability of the subjects. Intelligent, able readers made erroneous or misleading responses as frequently as they made insightful, penetrating ones" (Squire, 51).

In 1968, Purves and Rippers revised the categories of response suggested by Squire to produce the following list:

(1) Engagement-involvement,
(2) Perception,
(3) Evaluation,
(4) Interpretation,
(5) Miscellaneous.

Applebee reviewed subsequent studies that used this system and concluded that pre-adolescents focus on content whereas adolescents focus on interpretation. He also found that the sex of the reader makes no difference in the kind of response given and that students who do not understand a work focus on responses in the content and perception categories and not interpretation (Applebee, 1977:260).

Applebee also attempted to categorize the ways in which students evaluate works of literature. He discovered four categories of evaluation: (1) unintegrated—the reader identifies the story fully with his reactions to it—(2) categoric—the reader sees stories as falling into categories such as funny or interesting but does not recognize that these categories apply to his reaction, not to the story—(3) analytic—the reader analyzes the story: "How it works: its mechanics, the logic of its structure, its images and symbols" (1978: 109)—and (4) generalization—the reader applies the statement of the book to the world. He also found that children's attitudes toward and the kinds of responses they offer to literature develop with age. The young children in his study merely retold a story in part or in whole whereas the children of ages seven to eleven used summarization and categorization as modes of response. Children of twelve to fifteen began to analyze the motives of characters and to identify their own involvement with the work. By the time children had reached sixteen, they were able to make generalizations about the meaning of a work (Applebee 1978:99-125).

What is Happening When a Response Takes Place? There are two currently popular ways of looking at the causes of responses: schema theory and transactional theory. Schema theory explains response as the result of efforts on the part of readers to fit what they find into the structures that exist in their minds or to create revised or new structures formed on the basis of the new experiences coming to them from the work. Schema theory thus suggests that responding to a work of literature relies on the reader's past experience and prior knowledge. Pearson and Johnson explain the integration of new and old knowledge this way:

> *Assimilation occurs when we are able to categorize a new example as belonging to a pre-existing schema. . . . Accommodation occurs when we have to alter our schema . . . (Pearson and Johnson, 35).*

It is particularly when this latter activity—altering a schema—is occuring that a work of literature is felt by readers to have had a profound, often disturbing, impact on them.

Louise Rosenblatt's theory of response, which she called "transaction" in her 1978 book, *The Reader, the Text, and the Poem,* continues to have a profound influence on the teaching of literature. She defines the term transaction as "an ongoing process in which the elements or factors are . . . aspects of a total situation, each conditioned by and conditioning the others" (Rosenblatt, 1978:17). In the reading process, the text becomes a set of physical symbols, and the reader organizes these symbols to interpret the text. "What is perceived involves both the perceiver's contribution and the stimulus" (19). During the reading, the author is forgotten by the reader. All that remains is the text and the reader. "The relation with the author becomes a transaction between the reader and the author's text," Rosenblatt says. "The transaction is between the reader and the direction he senses the text is leading" (21), thus giving him some focus for the scope of his interpretation. But that transaction is what is important, not merely the reader, on the one hand, or the text, on the other.

So What Does Research Tell Us? Even from this quick look at research into responses to literature, it is clear that responses are very personal, indeed, that the importance of response to literature is that it is personal. Without that individuality, there would be no meaningful response. Although Rosenblatt warned of the danger that schema theory as well as her own transactional theory "may be misunderstood as focusing too narrowly on the mind of the reader" (Rosenblatt, 1978:21), each student makes each work he or she reads over into a new creation. The transaction between the reader and the text produces that unique and totally new creation that Beach refers to (Beach, 1979:132).

Mistakes in reading occur, of course; but they occur because of what is on the reader's side of the interaction. They are, in a sense, inevitable. The teacher may, of course, try to remedy them after they have occurred. That is the way we have usually dealt with the teaching of literature.

A better approach, however, is to select works that require what the reader can bring to them. When that is not possible, a teacher should try to build into prospective readers of a work, in advance of their reading it, what they will need in order to be able to respond when they do encounter it.

After reading a work, students can benefit from sharing their responses, but only if the foundations for that sharing are carefully constructed. Bleich in *Readings and Feelings*, for example, presents a four-step program for use in the classroom that he feels will encourage students to examine their own responses to literature, share their responses with peers, and arrive at least at a partial group consensus as to the value of a work. He labels his four steps (1) thoughts and feelings, (2) feelings and literature, (3) deciding on literary importance, and (4) interpretation (Bleich, 1978).

At the same time, teachers should realize that there are different types of responses to literature and that many students are, at least at certain times in their lives, only capable of a limited range of these. To push too hard for other types of response—particularly highly analytical types—may be to discourage response entirely. When a student fails to have satisfying responses to a work, that failure is, in Rosenblatt's terms, a result of an inadequate transaction, not stupidity or laziness on the part of the reader. Research suggests that readers who fail to have the types of responses the teacher would like for them to have may, in fact, not be ready developmentally to have those types of responses.

It could be argued, therefore, that the traditional way of teaching literature, which requires of students a very limited range of responses that are mostly analytical and impersonal, is based on ignorance of the real nature of response, especially when the same response is expected of all students. Indeed, Purves discovered that high school literature instruction is a cause of misinterpretation on the part of some readers (Purves, 1973). Acceptance of, indeed delight in, the variation of response that will very naturally occur in a school classroom makes far better sense in the light of research into the nature of literary response than an expectation that all students will gain the same insights and have the sames feelings when they read the same book.

References

Adams, M. and B. Bruce. "Background Knowledge and Reading Comprehension." In J. A. Langer and M. T. Burk-Smith, eds. *Reader Meets Author: Bridging the Gap*, International Reading Association, 1982, 2-25.

Applebee, A. N. *The Child's Concept of the Story*, University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Applebee, A. N. "The Elements of Response to a Literary Work: What We Have Learned," *Research in the Teaching of English*, Winter 1977, 255-271.

Bleich, David. "Psychological Bases of Learning from Literature," *College English*, October, 1971, 32-45.

Bleich, David. *Readings and Feelings*, National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

Pearson, D. and D. Johnson. *Teaching Reading Comprehension*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

Purves, A. C. *Literature Education in Ten Countries*, John Wiley and Sons, 1973.

Purves, A. C. and Richard Beach. *Literature and the Reader: Research in Response to Literature, Reading Interests, and the Teaching of Literature*, National Council of Teachers of English, 1972.

Purves, A. C. and V. Rippere. *Elements of Writing about a Literary Work: A Study of Response to Literature*, National Council of Teachers of English, 1968.

Richards, I. A. *Practical Criticism*, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1929.

Rosenblatt, Louise. *Literature as Exploration*, Appleton-Century, 1938.

Rosenblatt, Louise. *The Reader, the Text, the Poem*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1978.

Squire, James. *The Responses of Adolescents While Reading Four Short Stories*, National Council of Teachers of English, 1964.

Robert Small is Professor of English Education at Virginia Tech. Ruth Fisher is a doctoral student there.

BULLETIN'S EDITORS-ELECT APPOINTED

At its October meeting, the VATE Executive Board appointed co-editors for the *Virginia English Bulletin*. Their five year term commences January 1, 1986; they will serve as associate editors during 1985. The co-editors have extensive experience in scholarly endeavors, including editing publications of NCTE and VATE.

Congratulations to Editors-Elect

Dr. Robert C. Small, Jr. and Dr. Patricia P. Kelly
College of Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, VA 24061

The Power of a Good Book

I love to read a good book! It is an escape, a pleasure, a delightful adventure into the unknown, or a deeper exploration of the familiar. To read a good book, no matter what type or theme, is to experience a freshening of the mind. Books are personal, though. Not everyone has the same taste in books, but we all have one thing in common, we know what we like. What doors books open! The opportunity to be anyone, anywhere, any time at the turn of a page.

I stumbled upon a good book the other day. A book so powerful to me that my mind couldn't contain all the ideas, possibilities, and simple imagination that this book evoked. *Tuck Everlasting* (Bantam, 1975), a novel by Natalie Babbitt, concerns a secret that is exciting and, at the same time, fearsome. It is the story of a young girl's encounter with a strange family, the Tucks. This family, Mae, Tuck, and their sons, Miles and Jesse, drank from a spring that caused them to stop aging and have eternal life. They were destined to continue on through life exactly as they were—forever! The Tucks could never be physically hurt, changed in any way, or die. Winnie Foster accidently learned their secret, and was faced with a dilemma: keep the secret or rush to the spring. What follows is a charming story, bittersweet and fascinating.

Tuck Everlasting has a major strength, its ability to make us consider and ponder the possibilities. On the surface, a simple decision: drink from the spring and live forever, or not. Isn't everlasting life what everyone would want? Perhaps not; these people have no home; they cannot remain in one place too long, because people would wonder why they weren't growing old. Imagine what they missed by not having roots. The oldest son, Miles, once had a beloved family who fled in terror when they aged and he did not.

Father Tuck explained to Winnie the true unhappiness of their lives: " 'We ain't part of the wheel no more . . . everywhere around us, things is moving, and growing and changing.' " (p. 57.)

Winnie thought this over for a minute, then blurted out that she didn't want to die.

" 'No,' said Tuck calmly. 'Not now. Your time's not now. But dying is part of the wheel right next to being born. . . But it's passing us by, us Tucks. Living's heavy work, but off to one side, the way we are, it's useless too. It don't make sense. If I knowed how to climb back on the wheel, I'd do it in a minute. You can't have living without dying. So you can't call it living, what we got. We just are, we just be, like rocks beside the road.' " (p. 57.)

Once one realizes the implications of this everlasting life, one shares the Tucks' desire to keep the spring a secret. What would happen to the world if everyone drank from it? Would someone seize control and select who was to drink it? Little children would stay little and old people would stay old—frozen in time. Could humans still reproduce? If so, would they soon overpopulate? Would animals drink the water and live forever? What might this do to the food chain? Could plants be affected? How about bacteria and disease?

As an educator, I became excited and intrigued by the images these questions created. From these questions others would be asked, discussions could be generated, activities developed. Some examples of possible activities came to mind, which would be appropriate for junior high or middle school students:

Speculation

1. Describe your hometown 10 years after its "life" spring has been discovered by the people.

2. Rewrite part of the story using one of the following ideas:
a) The Russians discover the spring.
b) The Tucks discover the spring in 1984.
c) Winnie drinks from the spring.

3. Compose a letter to James written by Winnie just before she dies, explaining why she made her decision.

Drama

1) Write a T.V. commercial that advertises the water to sell to the public. Work in small groups and videotape the commercials.

2) Create a script using Tuck Everlasting's *basic idea. Develop new characters, setting, and change the story line.*

Interdisciplinary

Discuss and list some of the events, inventions, and creations that the Tucks might encounter between the years 1793 (when they first found the spring) and 1984.

Certainly a thought provoking concept, and if this quality makes a good book, then *Tuck Everlasting* exhibits the power and potential that most "good books" possess.

Gayle Sterrett teaches at Northumberland Middle School in Heathsville.

Some Plain Truths about Teaching English: Education Reform

COALITION OF ENGLISH ASSOCIATIONS, 1984 (NCTE News Release)

Prompted by recent reports on American education, many communities are now trying to strengthen their schools' English programs as a part of general educational reform. A number of government agencies are considering proposals which will affect the teaching of English. But without a clear understanding of the field, the reformers may fail to achieve this goal. The reports offer little specific guidance to those who must implement the changes. Some of the reports simply assert the value of English; others offer suggestions based on limited understanding of the subject. To provide a foundation for successful reform, we offer the public, as a preliminary response, a few plain truths:

1. *English studies includes the study of both literature and writing.* Although most of the reports assert the value of learning to write, they fail to recognize the importance of studying literature.

The ability to write effectively is obviously crucial. Writing helps people conduct the business of living. It helps them solve problems and express themselves. It forces them to create meaning in words, to explore who they are and what they think. Writing provides an invaluable means of understanding all fields and of sharing knowledge.

(Continued on page 64)

Introducing High School Students to the Writings of William Faulkner

Elizabeth Hayes Burnett

English teachers have always been concerned with having enough time to teach effectively the works of literature, subject matter in grammar, and the skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. One problem in the chronologically organized literature curriculum that sometimes arises is that teachers do not have adequate time at the end of the school year to place much emphasis on some of the important modern writers of our time. Even if the course is arranged by genre or by thematic units, often there is time for only one or two selections by a particular writer. One writer who should have a place in high school American Literature courses who should receive more attention than in the past is William Faulkner, whose writings have been compared by some to those of Shakespeare and who is undoubtedly one of the most important twentieth century writers, perhaps even regarded by many as the single most important American writer of our times. His writing is of world-wide acclaim, translated into languages throughout the world, because it contains the range of situations in which people find themselves and the entire extent of human emotions; *i.e.* according to Faulkner, "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself. . . ." (2, p. 3)

One work by Faulkner found in many high school courses is the short story, "The Bear," and in many cases this may be the only Faulkner selection that many students are exposed to in the high school years. Told by a third person narrator, "The Bear" is the story of a young boy's learning to be a skilled hunter as well as his learning the meaning of courage and truth. While this short story is an appropriate selection for good and especially for advanced readers, experienced teachers have found "The Bear" to be a difficult story for reluctant or slow readers who simply do not want to stick to the reading.

Another selection which is sometimes included in high school curricula is the short story "A Rose for Emily." Although students do seem to enjoy the story, both because of its subject matter about a young woman whose suitors had been driven away by her father, and because of its gruesome, shocking ending, the happenings are actually quite perverse for teenagers to comprehend other than superficially. One of the themes found in "A Rose for Emily" is that when a person is not allowed to respond in natural ways to life's situations, the person sometimes responds later in some way that is unnatural; *i.e.*, in Faulkner's own words, ". . . it was a natural instinct. . .—you can mash it down but it comes up somewhere else and very likely in a tragic form, ..."

If one or two literary selections such as these are the only ones by Faulkner to be included in the secondary curriculum, then some high school students either may receive a very limited introduction to Faulkner

or may be discouraged by complex and difficult reading, possibly even missing later this important author and his writings. If, on the other hand, teachers present a few other Faulkner works as alternative selections which are meaningful, appropriate both in subject matter and in level of comprehension, and intellectually exciting because of ideas or insights, then students may be challenged to read and to discover later at a higher level of understanding more of Faulkner's writings. In some classes with advanced students, a teacher may find it appropriate to include all of these selections.

What selections would most appropriately introduce Faulkner's writings to high school students? A number of Faulkner's less difficult works which contain some of the major themes presented in his most complex works are suitable subject matter for the high school. One of these works, for example, which is included in some American literature courses but should probably be included in all of them, is "William Faulkner's Speech of Acceptance upon the Award of the Nobel Prize for Literature." This speech contains some of the themes that are found in many of Faulkner's other complex works; *i.e.*, that man will not only endure but will also prevail, and that man has "a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance." (2. p. 4) Writing at a time of fear of nuclear destruction, Faulkner affirms a belief in the best that is in man and in the capacity of man to make the choice to prevail:

> I decline to accept the end of man. It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure: that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. (2, p. 4)

In this speech Faulkner also examines the question: What are the most valuable things for the writer to record? He challenges the young writer not to be afraid of the "general and universal physical fear" (2, p. 3) and not to forget the most important writing material; *i.e.*, the truths of "love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." (2, pp. 3-4) According to Faulkner, it is the writer's duty to write about man's "spirit of compassion and sacrifice and endurance" (2, p. 4) and to help man endure by writing about the universal truths (2, pp. 3-4).

Another speech which is generally less well known but nevertheless extremely useful for high school teaching is Faulkner's "Address to the Graduating Class, University High School" in 1951. Since Faulkner's audience is a group of high school seniors and since the subject matter is universal in theme, this speech has direct appeal to the youth of any decade. He begins by quoting the wise Frenchman: "'If youth knew; if age could.'" (6, p. 122) He challenges individual men and women to change the world by eradicating injustice, suffering, and war. Faulkner

cautions youth of the danger of "forces. . . which are trying to use man's fear to rob him of his individuality, his soul," (6, p. 123) and tells them that they must resist fear and ignorance in order to change the world for peace and security. He challenges his listeners never to be afraid to speak out for honesty and truth (6, pp. 123-124). In this speech he reaffirms a belief in man to save himself, to choose right from wrong, and to be courageous:

> It is not men in the mass who can and will save Man. It is Man himself, created in the image of God so that he shall have the power and the will to choose right from wrong, and so be able to save himself . . . ; —Man, the individual, . . ., who will refuse always to be tricked or frightened or bribed into surrendering, not just the right but the duty too, to choose between justice and injustice, courage and cowardice, sacrifice and greed, pity and self; —who will believe always not only in the right of man to be free of injustice and rapacity and deception, but the duty and responsibility of man to see that justice and truth and pity and compassion are done. (6, p. 123)

One of Faulkner's short essays which is noted especially for its humor is "A Guest's Impression of New England." Faulkner relates an occasion when he and Malcolm Cowley were driving on the back roads in Massachusetts and Connecticut and realized that they were lost. Finally, they saw two farmers standing in front of a house. Cowley stopped and asked them if the road in front of their house crossed the mountain. Upon receiving an affirmative, courteous reply, Cowley drove on and then suddenly backed up to ask if they thought he could get over it in his car (6, pp. 44-45). Once again, the reply was quiet and courteous, " 'No,' . . . . 'I dont think you can.' " (6, p. 45)

Faulkner, observing the simple dignity and quiet but courteous answer of the farmer, muses over how different the answer might have been in another part of the country:

> In the West, the Californian . . . would assure us that our car could not possibly make the crossing but that he had not only a car that could make it, but the only car west of the Rocky Mountains that could do it; in the Central States and the East we would have been given directions to circumvent the mountain, based on obscure third-count road forks . . . , which Gabriel himself could not have followed; in my own South the two Mississippians would have adopted us before Cowley could have closed his mouth . . . , saying (one of them; the other would already be getting into the car):
>
> 'Why sure, it wont be no trouble at all; Jim here will go with you and I'll telephone across the mountain for my nephew to meet you with his truck where you are stuck; . . . he'll even have a mechanic waiting. . . .' (6, p. 45)

In this essay Faulkner is reporting a brief incident, a humorous moment in his experience of reflecting about the cultural responses of people in different parts of the country. He perceives the New Englander as respecting the individual's absolute right to privacy above all else

without interference. Obviously relating with great fondness and warmth the Southerner's inclination to protect as well as to aid anyone in trouble, Faulkner characterizes one in his own South as a participant, actively involved in solving even a stranger's problem. High school students will enjoy the essay for its straightforward language, its subject matter, and especially its humor.

Faulkner was outspoken on various social and political issues in letters to the editors of a number of newspapers. In view of some of the conflicts that develop today in saving some of the old historic buildings to preserve a cultural heritage, students will be interested in a letter that Faulkner wrote to the editor of the *Oxford Eagle* published on March 13, 1947. The letter protested the tearing down of the courthouse in Oxford, Mississippi, in the name of "progress":

> . . . all we have left now to distinguish an old southern town from any one of ten thousand towns built yesterday from Kansas to California are the Confederate monument, the courthouse and the jail. Let us tear them down too and put up something covered with neon and radio amplifiers. (6, p. 202)

Because many high school students have various pets (and some have doubtless lost a favorite pet), they may also be interested in another letter published in the *Oxford Eagle* on August 15, 1946, that Faulkner wrote about the apparent hit-and-run death of a fifteen-months-old puppy named Pete. Entitled "His Name Was Pete," the letter was a cry of outrage against motorists who, because they are careless or negligent, run over an animal and leave it to die without stopping to call for help to save its life. Faulkner was obviously angered at the senselessness and inhumanity of such an act (6, pp. 200-202).

Faulkner's book review of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* may be easily read to students who are studying the novel. Brief in length, direct in its language, and powerful in meaning, the words of this book review have become well known to Faulkner readers:

> His best. Time may show it to be the best single piece of any of us, . . . This time, he discovered God, a Creator, . . . something somewhere that made them all: . . . ; made them all and loved them all and pitied them all. (6, p. 193)

Among Faulkner's short stories, perhaps "Race At Morning" is one of the most appropriate for teenagers' level of understanding and appreciation. Told from the viewpoint of a twelve-year-old boy who has been abandoned by his parents and who thinks he has no need to go to school, "Race At Morning" is an account of the boy's rescue by the old man in the story, Mister Ernest, and of the hunting experience they both share as each experiences growth. Some students may have difficulty with the use of dialect in the story, but this problem may be overcome with the help of a skilled teacher. On the surface it is the fast-moving story of a race to catch a buck in the woods, but its larger meaning relates to the

theme of responsibility toward mankind. Faulkner's own idea about the story was that the "... uneducated ignorant man was fumbling after something which he had realized late in his life ... That no man can be an island to himself, that you have a responsibility toward mankind." (5, p. 236) In the process of caring for the orphan, according to Faulkner, "The man was probably changed more than the little boy was." (5, p. 237) Finally, at the end of the story Mister Ernest tells the boy that he must learn the meaning of responsibility:

> You got to belong to the business of mankind. ....So you're going to school. .... You can belong to the farming and hunting business and you can learn the difference between what's right and what's wrong, and do right. And that used to be enough—just to do right. But not now. You got to know why it's right and why it's wrong, and be able to tell the folks that never had no chance to learn it; teach them how to do what's right, ... (3, p. 196)

At the beginning of the story, the reader is plunged into the race and feels a sense of the forward motion as the chase begins; the race speeds up with faster motion, slows down, and then speeds up again. Teenagers will probably enjoy the race as much as the twelve-year-old in the story enjoys it, and the fast-paced surface meaning of the story will probably hold the attention of most students. Some may even identify with the boy's idea that he has no need to learn to write: " 'I don't need to write my name down,' .... 'I can remember in my mind who I am.' " (3, p. 175) High school students will be interested in the story for its subject matter, its humor, and the dialogue at the end between Mister Ernest and the boy about belonging to mankind and about the value of going to school. Many students will probably even grasp the idea that it was not so important whether the boy killed the buck or not; it was the experience itself and what he learned from the process of that experience that was significant.

The selections discussed above are not intended to be a complete list but are only a few of Faulkner's writings which contain much of the same philosophical outlook toward life, thematic content, and humor as do many of his most difficult works. By presenting some of these literary choices, the skilled teacher may introduce high school students to profound thematic concerns, such as responsibility toward mankind, living without fear, or man's spirit which is capable of compassion and endurance, in works that are understandable and interesting to the high school student, and, at the same time invite them to discover later for themselves Faulkner's complex world of Yoknapatawpha in the more mature works.

References

1. Faulkner, William. "The Bear." Edited by Joseph Blotner. *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House, 1979.
2. ———. *The Faulkner Reader: Selections from the Works of William Faulkner*. New York: Random House, 1958.

3. ———. "Race At Morning." *Big Woods*. New York: Random House, 1955.
4. ———. "A Rose for Emily." Edited by Malcolm Cowley. *The Portable Faulkner*. New York: The Viking Press, 1966.
5. Gwynn, Frederick L. and Blotner, Joseph L., eds. *Faulkner in the University: Class Conferences at the University of Virginia 1957-1958*. Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 1959.
6. Meriwether, James B., ed. *Essays, Speeches and Public Letters by William Faulkner*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1967.

Beth Burnett is Associate Professor of English Education at the University of South Carolina.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Winter 1985 issue of *Virginia English Bulletin* will have a double focus:

(1) *Literature for students, Kindergarten through Grade 12*

This theme may include such diverse topics as using imaginative literature to teach reading, Southern voices in literature, individual response, teaching literature selections, patterns of organizing the study of literature, literary selections appropriate for designated students, *et al.*

(2) *To achieve peace, we have to work at it*

The English classroom is a place for questioning, reflecting, probing concerns of the human condition. Achieving world peace is such a concern. What is our responsibility in the classroom to help students develop perspectives about this concern? Should we assist students, for example, in achieving conflict resolution abilities? Is there literature which explores peace in families or communities? Literature which explores conditions of war and of peace? Are there writing assignments which permit students to reflect on this concern? Is there attention in the classroom to examining oral rhetoric that promotes or discourages peace? (If, for instance, we say we need more advanced weapons to *threaten* the enemy so that we maintain peace, are we promoting peaceful or belligerent attitudes?)

[redacted]

The desire for control over one's life is a characteristic of adolescence long recognized by sociologists, psychologists, teachers, parents, and teenagers alike. It is only natural, therefore, that it becomes a theme frequently explored by writers of adolescent literature. The purpose of this essay is to examine the methods by which adolescents attempt to control their lives, using as illustrations protagonists from a collection of young adult novels written between 1964-1983.

The means by which adolescents attempt to control their lives range across a broad spectrum—from the socially acceptable traditional to the socially unacceptable radical. The degree to which a specific means is accepted or rejected depends heavily upon the mores of the community in which the adolescent lives.

For the purpose of this essay, methods by which adolescents seek to control their lives are defined as:

1. Decisions based on a merger between individually established values and parental guidance or decisions based exclusively on personal values
2. Rejection/Rebellion
3. Self-Expression
4. Suicide

Adolescents who make decisions based on their established values coupled with some guidance from their parents find their behavior generally acceptable in the community in which they live. This behavior is usually a manifestation of socially accepted values, and is non-threatening to adults. However, when teenagers attempt to root their behavior in higher ideals, it may set them apart from the mainstream of current thought in their communities. Because they are unwilling to make adjustments to their behavior, often concessions to practicality or civility, actually, they may be seen as disruptive, and staying the course may become a test of courage for the teenager. The ensuing conflict seems to the teenager a matter of right versus might, good versus evil, youthful idealism, clear and pure, versus the corruption of the jaded, adult world.

On the other hand, teenagers attempting to control their lives through personal values which are warped or misguided are likely to find themselves in trouble in society. The testing of such aberrant values will often result in confrontation with society in which consequences must be paid or re-clarification of values must be made. Such is the case well illustrated by the teenagers' conflict in Lois Duncan's *Killing Mr. Griffin* (1978).

Several cases in adolescent literature illustrate the various methods by which teenagers attempt to control their lives.

METHOD 1—DECISIONS BASED ON PERSONAL VALUES

Case Study 1: Jerry Renault, *The Chocolate War*, Robert Cormier.

Jerry Renault, freshman at Trinity in *The Chocolate War* (1974), is put to the ultimate test of attempting to control his life through decisions based on personal values. He is subjected to psychological, and eventually physical, intimidation which he endures from his classmates, the Vigils, and even Brother Leon, his teacher, because of his resistance to participating in the school's annual chocolate sale. He asks himself repeatedly, "Do I dare disturb the universe?" Should he buck the system of corruption and conformity? Can he preserve his integrity through steadfastness to his values, values which are still in the formative stages? Cormier poses these questions and then answers them for the adolescent reader though Jerry's actions, rendering Jerry the quintessential adolescent hero. His test becomes one of courage to fight the system at the expense of alienation.

To what extent Jerry can successfully control his life in the future is a matter of conjecture. Cormier refuses to resolve unequivocally this question yet leaves the reader with a glimmer of hope. The outlook for Jerry seems faintly promising because he has responded consistently to outside pressures with unwavering courage and ironclad resilience.

METHOD 1—DECISIONS BASED ON A MERGER OF VALUES

Case Study 2: Blissful Bowman, *Blissful Joy and the S.A.T.'s*, Sheila Greenwald.

Blissful Bowman in *Blissful Joy and the S.A.T.'s* (1982) is the epitome of the teenager seeking to control her life by following "the straight and narrow," adhering to the well-formulated, internalized values acquired during her 16½ years of maturation. It is ironic that her socially valued and acceptable behavior are antithetical to the topsy-turvy, unorthodox world in which she lives. They create nothing but conflict for her. As a beautiful, popular, academically outstanding student with aspirations set on Vassar, Blissful attempts to order and control her life in a conventional manner which does not exactly fit the contemporary environment in which she finds herself. While she is not forced to abandon her principles, she is required to gain a new perspective on life which results in a somewhat re-ordered structure of her values. Blissful will probably succeed in controlling her life in the future because she has managed to adapt and mature within a well-established value system.

METHOD 2—REJECTION/REBELLION

A second method by which some teenagers seek to control their lives is rebellion or rejection. Rebellion against parents, against traditional institutions such as school, church, the law and even peer behavior codes has long been with us. For most teenagers the results are self-inflicted conflicts which fortunately are temporal. The intensity and duration tend to vary with the commitment and maturity of the individual.

METHOD 2—REBELLION

Case Study 3: Barnie, Teresa, Mouth-Breathers, et al., *Secrets of the Shopping Mall*, Richard Peck, 1979.

Teenagers attempting to take control of their lives through rebellion is illustrated by Richard Peck's *Secrets of the Shopping Mall*. Not only do the

main characters, Barnie and Teresa, leave home to seek a better life, but also a group of dissatisfied upper middle class teenagers disgruntled with their restrictive environments of home and school. *Secrets* demonstrates conclusively teenagers' inability to control their lives to their expectations by rebelling and running away. They discover that the society they create within the department store of Forbes and Ledmar is no more than a cruel reflection of the environment they sought to escape, full of the encumbrances they found stifling at home.

Only for Teresa, whose past had little to offer, is the future "under her control" filled with a little ray of sunshine. From Agnes, Betty, Barbie, Butch, *et al.* comes their admission of failure to control their lives through rebellion. Only by leaving Forbes and Ledmar and returning to their suburban lifestyles will they be "readier than they expected to commit a few Independent Acts"—to control their lives.

METHOD 2—REJECTION

Case Study 4: Louise, *Jacob Have I Loved,* Katherine Paterson.

In *Jacob Have I Loved* (1980) the reader is exposed to the problem of sibling rivalry between Louise and her "favored" sister Caroline. Louise perceives herself as rejected and attempts to gain control by rejecting stereotypical roles and those around her—her sister, her parents, her grandmother, and her schoolmates.

She seeks refuge as a waterman's helper on her father's boat—a role traditionally confined to males. Through her experience as a waterman's helper, she matures and gains the confidence ultimately required to face the outside world. Louise's decision to control her life by rejecting those around her eventually strengthens her character as an independent, self-reliant woman who matures to realize the shortsightedness of her youthful, embittered outlook on life.

METHOD 3—SELF-EXPRESSION

Self-expression is another means by which adolescents seek control of their lives. Self-expression can be manifested in either constructive or destructive behavior. Constructive outlets include expression through the arts (performing, dramatic and visual), sports and writing (keeping a journal or diary being one of the most popular). Relatively harmless means of self-expression are manifested through unusual or outlandish appearance expressed through clothing, jewelry, hairstyles (punk rock is in vogue today—25 years ago it was the "Fonz" look and mohawk haircuts).

Destructive methods for controlling one's life include self-indulgence (such as over-eating), privation (such as anorexia nervosa), or a combination of indulgence/privation—bulimia. Articles appear with great regularity documenting the increase of these methods by which young adults attempt to take control of their lives today.

METHOD 3—SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH SELF-INDULGENCE

Case Study 5: Dinkey Hocker, *Dinkey Hocker Shoots Smack,* M. E. Kerr.

In *Dinkey Hocker Shoots Smack* (1972) we meet Dinkey, who seeks to control her life through self-expression in the form of self-indulgence. Feeling neglected by her activist mother and equipped with the financial means pro-

vided by her middle class background, Dinkey makes her way with great regularity to the local deli and Woerner's, the neighborhood restaurant, in Brooklyn Heights.

In describing Dinkey, M. E. Kerr says, "To ask someone like Dinkey to go into Woerner's Restaurant . . . to pick up pies for her mother was to ask a wino to drop in at a vineyard just to watch the bottling process." Dinkey controls others' reactions to her self-indulging, overeating behavior by responding with defensive sarcasm. When asked by her friends, "Why can't we reach you?" Dinkey replies, "That's a good question. It's certainly not because there isn't enough of me to reach."

Dinkey uses her self-indulgence to control her relationship with her mother. It provides a means of escape and a means to lash out at her mother at the same time. Dinkey's problem of self-indulgence is probably not resolved. The story concludes with a trip to Europe for Dinkey—a parental show of affection which will undoubtedly render her more rotund than ever.

METHOD 3—SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH SPORTS

Books abound about teenagers' successes in sports. While many are not strongly organized thematically, a few illustrate teenagers' attempts to control their lives through self-expression in sports.

Case Study 6: Lonnie Jackson, *Hoops,* Walter Dean Myers, 1981.

Hoops portrays a black seventeen year old who sees the only path to controlling his life through his basketball talent. Yearning to escape his depressing existence in Harlem, he faces difficult decisions about his future—decisions which ultimately render him a stronger individual in better control of his life.

Owenita Sanderlin's *Tennis Rebel* (1978), another sports book, reveals the story of teenager Kelly Anderson. Trying to escape the unhappiness of her parents' divorce, Kelly tries to take charge of her life through her talents in tennis. In her quest for stardom, she learns she must first come to grips with not only her parents, but also herself.

METHOD 4—SUICIDE

By far the most extreme, most destructive and the saddest method by which teenagers attempt to control their lives today is suicide. The rise in teenage suicide in the 1980's is shocking; the explanations for it rendered in suicide notes and tape recordings are devastating to family and friends. A spate of 1983 holiday suicides in Pennsylvania was explained in suicide notes left by the deceased teenagers who stressed how they sought to control their lives but could not. In the tapes left behind, they gave detailed instructions for their funerals—what they wanted to wear in their coffins, what music they wanted played—all the details which gave them the ultimate control over their lives as manifested by their deaths.

Case Study 7: Barney Snow, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway,* Robert Cormier.

In Robert Cormier's stark exploration of terminal illness, *The Bumblebee Flies Anyway* (1983) presents four teenagers in the "complex" whose only means to control life is to escape it through suicide. Barney Snow, the protagonist, who is the only patient unaware that his illness is terminal, decides to provide the ultimate "ride" for himself and his friend, Mazzo, upon learning that his fate, too, is sealed.

Other examples of teenagers attempting to control their lives through suicide include John Neufeld's *Lisa Bright and Dark* (1969), the story of an affluent, disturbed teenager whose mental illness is beyond the control of her family and friends and Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (1964), the story of a bright young woman who seeks control not only through several attempted suicides but also through escape from the real world by the creation of an imaginary one.

As illustrated here, adolescent literature can perform an important function beyond sheer entertainment. For many teenagers, it provides a catharsis by exploring themes such as controlling one's life—an issue which is foremost in the development stages of adolescence. It provides them with experiences which may be common to theirs, broadening their outlook and their capacity to deal with reality. It provokes teenagers to examine problems which do not always have resolutions or simple answers. It makes them think, not only about their particular situations but also about those of others.

Judy Baxter is Reading Consultant for the Newport News City Schools.

ENGLISH JOURNAL Calls for Manuscripts

Theme	*Deadline*
New Approaches in Teaching Composition	April 20, 1985
Humanities and the English Teacher	June 20, 1985
The All-Purpose English Teacher	August 20, 1985
English Teaching Outside the United States	October 20, 1985

Send ms. to:
Alleen Pace Nilsen, *English Journal*
College of Education
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ 85827

The Role of Reflection, Problem-Solving and Discussion in Teaching Literature

CHARLES R. DUKE

The need for reader involvement, of becoming engaged with a text to the point that the reader feels as if the text had been written expressly for him or her, has been well documented. But the moments when this engagement has occurred in the classroom, even for excellent readers, seem not to have happened with any regularity.[1]

For years we have taught students ABOUT literature because that was what we knew and were trained to do. We believed that knowing about literature would lead to proficiency in reading it and in understanding its many viewpoints. We were, of course, repeatedly dismayed by the results, but we attributed the failures either to our own poor planning and lecturing or to students' decreasing abilities to read and comprehend. Seldom did we stop to consider how we ourselves read nor did we analyze with any depth why we responded to some works as we did and why others left us unmoved. On occasion we may have championed literature study as a means for students to examine their own lives, but without a very clear sense of what we wanted to happen as a result. Bryant Fillion, however, has suggested that the "capacity to read and derive benefit from literature involves an interaction of at least three related abilities: aesthetic reading, reflecting, and problem-finding."[2]

Aesthetic reading, or what commonly has been called "literacy reading," is not new, but students' ability to experience literature aesthetically has not been explored very closely by classroom teachers even though such scholars as Louise Rosenblatt have been calling for its exploration in classrooms since 1938. More recently Rosenblatt has distinguished between two types of reading: Efferent (non-literary) and Aesthetic (literary). She says:

> In nonaesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as residue *after* the reading—the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out . . . In aestheic reading, in contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event . . . In aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text.[3]

Most students possess the ability to engage in a story, poem or play as an experience by itself. As a matter of fact, the experiences which students have with written language, reading, ideas, and the world in which they live are what provide them with this ability to read aesthetically. English teachers, of course, have given some attention to aesthetic reading, usually terming it the development of literary appreciation, but many of the classroom practices used to foster that appreciation have been counterproductive. Selections are often beyond students' experience, presenting unusual reading difficulty, and class "discussions" seem to

focus more on recall of content than exploration of students' experience with the texts. Although recall of text information is an important skill that needs development, if we do not also provide equal time for students to enjoy, contemplate and relive the experience of reading a text, we may be sending a contradictory message about what the purpose of literature study is. In fact, the outcome of aesthetic reading ought not to be a question-and-answer period with one reader—the teacher—quizzing another reader—the student. Instead, we need a shared exploration and discussion during which all readers' aesthetic responses are considered as part of the search for meaning.

One consideration in developing aesthetic reading has to do with the means for promoting reflection in readers. We could define such reflectiveness as the willingness of readers to contemplate what they are about to read or what they have read and its effect on them. As Fillion points out, "the reflective ability . . . necessary for the consideration of literature is also necessary for the contemplation of life—the adoption . . . of a 'poetic stance' toward life, reflecting on the human meaning of experience, to balance the 'scientific stance,' which closely analyzes the experience in objective terms." [4] Eric Lunzer and Keith Gardner call for a similar approach:

> Reading to answer questions can result in a passive absorption of facts rather than reflection or evaluation. It seems, therefore, that in organizing the purposes of reading across the curriculum, teachers need to balance 'getting information' with genuine inquiry.[5]

With time and practice, students can approach their reading as a process of inquiry. Learning then becomes a conversation between reader and text. However, the ability that students have developed to reflect on their reading seems to vary greatly and may depend largely upon the students' usual approach to experience and, at least to some degree, on what experiences they have had with reading in school. Part of the problem here may be that as teachers we often do too much of the reflecting for students. If this is the case, then we need to begin considering ways to place more responsibility for reflecting *with* students and then provide opportunities for them to express and share their reflections.

Another consideration in helping students with their aesthetic reading of literature is developing their ability to engage in questioning and problem-solving. Good readers distinguish themselves from weaker readers through the ability to ask questions and search for answers that promote greater comprehension of the text and of the reading experience accompanying it. Although it might seem to be a simple matter of producing a list of questions that all readers could memorize and then apply to any text, the result of such an approach is already too well measured in students' apathy to "questions for discussion" and other such apparatus that appear in today's literature anthologies. No—the questions to be at all useful ultimately must be generated by students. Yet we face a difficult task here because although students may be master questioners

in certain areas where they have strong interests, in literature classes where the teacher *is* the master "answer key," they typically feel at a disadvantage. To wean students gradually from such dependence, teachers need to create situations that provoke students into asking questions of their own in order to arrive at solutions satisfying to them. Problem-solving, though, is related to maturity and to familiarity with the subject. The more experience we have with something, the more likely we are to identify the questions that need to be asked. Therefore, we need to keep this principle in mind as we select literature that will provide problems for students to solve.

We could term this reading of literature as the inquiry mode, a mode based on the assumption that reflection and problem-solving are primary objectives in the teaching of literature and that these, in turn, will foster greater aesthetic and non-aesthetic reading skills on the part of students. To introduce this approach into the classroom, we need to focus the attention of students on actual inquiry and response and to provide opportunities for frequent practice in the process. Such an approach does not mean, however, that we must invent new strategies—after all, few methods exist which literature teachers have not tried at one time or another—but the emphasis upon inquiry and student activity becomes as important as the literature itself.

The following sequence of activities connected with the reading of Robert Frost's "Storm Fear" shows how such an approach might be introduced. The lesson moves through two stages—Reflection and Problem-solving—in which shared discussion plays a major role.

Reflection: Begin by asking students to think of the worst storm they have ever experienced. Then for five minutes they are to write down everything they can recall about that particular storm—sounds, sights, time, smells, location—without strict regard for order. Basically, they are free to write their memories of the sensory experience. After the five minutes of free writing, ask students to share a bit of their information. Suggest for example, that each student supply one or two details from the free writing that stimulate strong memories. Engage in brief discussion, encouraging students to ask each other questions about the information they volunteer.

With the sharing of the students' initial responses completed, ask them to return to their papers and this time free write for four or five minutes about their feelings as a person in the storm. Suggest that they try to recall how they felt, what thoughts went through their minds. At this stage, students may begin to write more freely; if so, let them continue beyond the limit, but watch for signs that the writing is gradually slowing down and when the majority of students seem to be withdrawing from the free writing, suggest that they stop. Then ask for the sharing again and encourage the same kind of questioning as before among the students as they listen to the different responses.

At this point, suggest that students take a few minutes to look over what they have written and then ask them to do the following:

A. Using the material from the first free writing, write one sentence which describes as graphically as possible the action of the storm; select words and details that will capture for us how you perceived the action at that time.

B. Using material from the second free writing, write a sentence which permits us to understand a key feeling you had or a key thought you associated with the storm.

Problem Solving: Once sudents have written their two sentences, you may want to have some of them read aloud or you may choose to move on to the following step and leave the reading for later. Indicate to students that they are about to see two sentences written by someone quite familiar with severe storms. In the first sentence, the writer lets us know about how he sees the storm. In the second sentence, the writer indicates the effect the storm had on him. Students should be asked to study the two sentences carefully. Once they are familiar with the writer's thoughts, they are to re-examine their own two sentences. Then they should begin to note the similarities and/or differences between the first sentence of the writer and theirs, jotting down some of the observations that occur to them as they study the two pieces of writing. When they have finished examining the two first sentences, they are to write a paragraph in which they explain what they have discovered. Then the process is repeated with the second sentence of the writer and that of the student, resulting in another paragraph of discovery.

Here are the two sentences with which students are to work:

1. "When the wind works against us in the dark and pelts with snow the lower-chamber-window on the east and whispers with a sort of stifled bark, the beast, "Come out!"—it costs no inward struggle not to go, Ah, no!"
2. "I count our strength, two and a child, those of us not asleep subdued to mark how the cold creeps as the fire dies at length—how drifts are piled, dooryard and road ungraded, till even the comforting barn grows far away and my heart owns a doubt whether 'tis in us to arise with day and save ourselves unaided."

This latter stage the teacher may wish to assign as homework, providing ample opportunity for students to study the two sentences carefully and to engage in considerable analysis, moving back and forth between their own accounts and that of Frost. Once the paragraphs have been written, ample time needs to be spent on discussion, letting students talk about their discoveries, comparing their experiences and how they expressed them, how they do or do not match with that of Frost, who, of course, remains unidentified at this point.

Depending upon the results of this sharing time where each student's discovery is as legitimate as another's, the teacher may follow one of two routes. The poem—and Frost—can be introduced if students seem quite comfortable with what he has expressed; or, if students seem still to be puzzled by his description of the storm, invite them to offer questions about his statements, perhaps listing the various queries on the chalk-

board. Then the poem can be presented, preferably with each student having a copy and the teacher or a selected student providing an oral reading of the work. In either route outlined above, the emphasis should continue to be on students' questioning and on their discovering possible solutions by discussion among themselves as to the problems addressed by the questions. These questions should quite easily lead to discussion about such things as the difference in effect that Frost's poem might have in sentence form as contrasted with poetic form; the relationship between snow storms and other kinds of storms which students might have identified in their early reflection. Questions related to form, to wording, to voice, style and other literary matters also will surface during this discussion and can be handled within the context of the student's own language and discovery.

As a final activity following the completion of the discussion, students might write a poem of their own related to their storm experience, develop a narrative of their experience, develop a more extended comparison/contrast between their responses and those of Frost, look for other poems related to the theme and respond, or take their initial questions and use them as a basis for an essay in which they introduce other readers to Frost's poem. These final activities serve a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, they permit students to reflect once again on the experience of reading and discussing the poem, while on the other, students have experienced a pre-reading, pre-writing experience that can now lead to a fully developed piece of writing, thus showing clearly to students how writing and reading lead to the discovery of meaning.

No one approach to literature, of course, will insure that all students become avid readers or that they will seek increasingly complex pieces of literature to read. However, if we as teachers provide more time in the classroom study of literature for acknowledging the role of the reader's response and experience in the reading process, then we might well expect a corresponding increase in students' facility with language, since it is language which will serve them as the principal vehicle for literary inquiry.

Storm Fear[6]
—Robert Frost

When the wind works against us in the dark,
And pelts with snow
The lower-chamber-window on the east,
And whispers with a sort of stifled bark,
The beast,
"Come out! Come out!"—
It costs no inward struggle not to go,
Ah, no!
I count our strength
Two and a child,
Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length,—
How drifts are piled,
Dooryard and road ungraded,
Till even the comforting barn grows far away

And my heart owns a doubt
Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
And save ourselves unaided.

Notes

[1] See Alan C. Purves. *Reading and Literature, American Achievement in International Perspective.* NCTE Research Report No. 20. Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1981.

[2] Bryant Fillion, "Reading as Inquiry: An Approach to Literature Learning," *English Journal* 70 (January 1981): 40.

[3] *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), pp. 23 and 24-25.

[4] Fillion, p. 41.

[5] *The Effective Use of Reading* (London: Heinemann, 1979), pp. 300-301.

[6] *Complete Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 13.

Charles R. Duke is Professor of English Education and Head, Department of Secondary Education, at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

CONGRATULATIONS TO VATE'S 1985 OFFICERS

President: Jackie Bryant

President-elect: Joan Lawson

Past-President: Judy Self

Secretary: Chris Hopkins

Members-at-Large

Nancy Manning, Elementary
Carolyn Hinson, Junior High/Middle School
Tom Callahan, Secondary
Denny Wolfe, College

Metaphor: A Literary Device and More

Edgar H. Thompson

Metaphors seldom come alive for students. For all of the effort that we English teachers put into the task of teaching students about metaphors, most students leave our classes with only the standard definition of metaphor or with the vague notion that a metaphor has something to do with poetry. Students don't usually realize that metaphors underpin and spark their imagination, stimulating higher level thinking.

If, as English teachers, we believe that metaphorical thinking is absolutely necessary for truly creative, analogic thinking, regardless of the area of inquiry, then the concept of metaphor needs to be made real and useful for our students. To accomplish this end, I think we can do two things. First, we can acquaint our students with the frequency of popular metaphors in everyday language, enhancing the sensitivity to metaphorical thought. Then, we can invite our students to read literature in light of what we know about the cognitive processes necessary for full comprehension of metaphors.

Exploring Popular Metaphors. Acquainting students with metaphors in everyday language should begin with a simpler definition of metaphor than we usually give our students. We should tell them that a metaphor is "any comparison that cannot be taken literally" (Bartel, 1983:3). With this definition in mind, we can explore metaphors in everyday language.

- *Folk Expressions and Proverbs:* Consider the phrase, "Bring home the bacon." This expression "goes back to the twelfth century when the bacon was literally a prize given to a couple who hadn't quarreled in a year" (Bartel, p. 5). Numerous so-called metaphors of this kind exist. According to Roland Bartel "folk expressions have migrated through three stages [across time]: [1] they began as literal terms, [2] they were converted into metaphors to express an old idea in a novel way, and [3] they again became literal when the metaphors were destroyed through overuse" (pp. 5-6). Books like *A Hog on Ice* and Bartel's *Metaphors and Symbols: Forays into Language* contain examples and explanations about the origins of expressions such as the following: cold shoulder, eavesdropper, dead as a doornail, brush up, kick the bucket, let the cat out of the bag, raking someone over the coals, have one's work cut out, earmarked, to a T, not dry behind the ears, and come to the end of one's rope.

- *Cliches:* Cliches comprise one of the richest sources of implied metaphors. This fact is somewhat ironic since as English teachers we encourage our students to avoid cliches "at all cost." Bartel states, "Whereas folk expressions often survive as compressed anecdotes, cliches are the less picturesque words and phrases based on short, transparent comparisons that are quickly coded and forgotten" (p. 9). Bartel continues that English teachers "do need to remind students that to qualify as metaphor/cliche an expression must show evidence that it is used outside its original category." For example, consider the following sports terms that have been adapted in this fashion: "jump the gun, touch all bases, throw in the towel, out in left field, . . ." (p. 9).

Peter Carlson's article "Food for Thought," which originally appeared in the "My Turn" column in *Newsweek*, May 29, 1978, provides a rich source of cliches, handled in an artistic manner, that can be shared and discussed with students. The first few lines from this piece are as follows:

> *The cliche, once a hallowed American tradition . . . is now poised on the brink of the crossroads—and it may be too late to turn back. . . . Before we allow it to go the way of the nickel phone call, however, we as a nation must take a good, hard look at this pressing problem.*
>
> *The cliche is as American as apple pie. . . .* (pp. 326-327)

The rest of this article continues in the above fashion, illuminating the metaphorical qualities that some cliches possess.

• *In Literal Words:* According to Bartel, literal definitions of words are essentially dictionary definitions. These meanings of words are the ones generally agreed upon by people;

> *metaphors . . . are not found in dictionaries because they are expressions designed to communicate new insights. Newness is the essence of metaphor: we invent them when we find literal language too dull or too restrictive for what we have to say. We invent a metaphor when we give a word a meaning not found in a dictionary.* (p. 10)

Most words in dictionaries are what Bartel calls "eroded metaphors" and "contain traces of worn-out comparisons." For example, consider the evolution tion of the word "grapple." This word initially referred to an implement or clamp used to lay hold of something. Usually it described instruments used to secure ships. Gradually, the word came to mean the way two fighters or wrestlers seized hold of one another. From these beginnings, the word eventually began to be used outside of its original meaning to describe metaphorically the behavior used by someone trying to overcome some difficulty. Other worn out comparisons similar to those contained in the definition of grapple can be found on any page of any dictionary. Searching through a dictionary for such comparisons can create a lively class discussion.

• *Slang:* Just as with cliches, most English teachers discourage their students from using slang. Of course, our students usually don't follow our advice, and when they don't, they are not being defiant or disrespectful. Actually, their motive may be more positive than we suspect. They may use slang out of a "desire for pleasure and variety in language, usually by novel comparisons." Slang is only in the loosest sense metaphorical: "In slang, the comparisons are often so strained or so remote that they are hardly noticeable as comparisons, a fact that gives slang its most distinctive quality." Consider a few examples of slang that have been used down through the years to describe getting fired: "to be axed, booted, bounced, canned, chucked, sacked; to get the gate, a pink slip, or walking papers" (Bartel, 1983:13-14).

Students are experts on slang. All we have to do is ask them for some current examples and a class discussion of implied comparisons is inevitable.

Cognitive Processing of Metaphors. Once students have an informal understanding of what a metaphor is, we can reinforce and extend their understanding by showing them how to process metaphors in their thinking. According to Guthrie (1984), there are probably three steps that lead to a complete understanding of metaphor:

> *First, the sentence is read and its literal meaning is extracted. Second if this literal meaning is defective (i.e., not sensible), we search for a second, figurative meaning. Third, the figurative meaning, if discovered, is examined and accepted or rejected. Metaphorical processing occurs when all three stages have been completed.* (p. 575)

Our students frequently don't get beyond this first step when we ask them to read a piece of literature. They become confused. Instead of teaching our students a way of overcoming this confusion, however, we all too often tell them what the literature "really means." I think a better way to proceed is to teach students a strategy that will allow them, on their own, to resolve their confusion about what a piece of literature means.

One way of accomplishing this goal is to use what we know about metaphorical processing and present students with the following questions to guide their reading of a piece of literature:

1. *Read the story, poem, or essay and try to understand as much of it as you can. Don't worry if you don't understand everything after this first reading.*
   a. *What does the piece say or mean to you?*
   b. *Was there anything in the piece that caused you difficulty or confused you?*
2. *Read the piece again and look for metaphors.*
   a. *How do the metaphors relate to the subject of the piece or its meaning?*
   b. *Do the metaphors illuminate the subject or clarify the meaning for you?*
3. *Are the metaphors successful?*
   a. *Do the metaphors reveal meaning in new, surprising ways?*
   b. *Do the metaphors fall flat? Do they add very little?*

Students need first to be taught how to use this strategy in our classrooms when we are available to help them overcome initial difficulties. A beginning lesson might proceed in the following fashion. When students first read Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 116, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds," they usually express confusion. Of course, part of this confusion is the strangeness of Elizabethan language to them. Another part of the confusion, however, comes from their lack of understanding about the metaphors Shakespeare used in this sonnet. After an initial reading, teachers can help students grapple with the language and can make a list of questions about the sonnet's meaning. At this point, some of the metaphors can be identified; e.g. "It [love] is an ever-fixed mark, that looks on tempests and is never shaken." When the meanings of words and metaphors are clarified, students then have a basis for judging to what extent the metaphors in the sonnet add or detract from the message Shakespeare tried to communicate about love. This strategy works well with any kind of contemporary or classical literature, whether poem, short story, play, or novel.

We don't want our students leaving our classrooms with only a worn out definition of metaphor. Instead, we want them to take pleasure in the "tension, surprise, [and] dynamic interation of two nearly incompatible terms" that metaphors create (Bartel, 1983:56). Having students explore the various kinds of popular metaphor, and then asking them to read literature using the strategy I've outlined, will help students learn that a metaphor is more than just a vague literary term.

Bibliography

Bartel, Roland. *Metaphors and Symbols: Forays into Language.* Urbana, Illinois: NCTE, 1983.

Carlson, Peter. "Food for Thought." In *Popular Writing in America.* Ed. Donald McQuade and Robert Atwan. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.

Guthrie, John T. "A Psychology of Poetry?" *Journal of Reading,* 27 (Winter 1984): 574-576.

Herb Thompson recently completed his doctorate at Virginia Tech. He teaches at Blacksburg High.

The Alice Books

Patrick Wolfenbarger

Somewhere in the shuffle of children's books Lewis Carroll's two *Alice* novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), may have collected mildew. These golden oldies deserve a new look.

In order to get children ready for an illogical experience, let me suggest a new approach to the *Alice* stories. Lewis Carroll's wonderful world deserves careful scrutiny, and a shift in gears from logical eyes to an illogical vision may prove fascinating. The strategy to shift gears from logic to nonsense is a game I call "PUN-IN-TRIP-OUT." The instructions are simple: Create a sentence which uses one word forcefully; Create a pun with that word; Follow the pun-in sequence with a trip-out story, taking you somewhere you really could not go but do; Allow the story to continue around the room, each child adding outrageous, illogical characters.

To help children shift gears mentally, I suggest possible puns with these words: rake as a rogue and rake as a yard tool; wood and would; stare as to look and stair as steps; not as "No" and not as knot; sole as a fish and sole as part of a shoe; eye and I; heel as a base person and heel as the back of your foot; sight as something seen and sight as seeing; hair and hare; knight and night; sun and son; tail and tale; jerk as a stupid, foolish person and jerk as a quick movement. Try the following dialogue to make it clear to the children how to use the "pun" strategy.

A: Will you bring me a rake so I can clean up the back yard?
B: How are you going to get a rake to work for you? Everyone knows not to trust a rake.
A: Why not? A rake is a rake is a rake.
B: Yes, and a rake by any other name would smell just as roguish.
A: I just want to use a rake to rake leaves.
B: But the rake I send you will want to rake in money.

Or try this snappy dialogue sequence to create laughter in the pun-in game to shift logical eyes to fantasy:

A: Where is that knight going?
B: Don't know. But I hope he knows because it is getting dark. It is almost night.
A: Well surely a knight knows his way through the woods in the night.
B: I hope so. He's been knighted.
A: And is a member of the knighthood.
B: Probably King Arthur's.
A: Yes, and his knights of the Round Table.
B: The knight's gone now and I didn't even get to wish him good-night.
A: Nor I. Maybe we get to do so another night.
B: Or with another knight anyway.

Another strategy to shift gears to an illogical gleefulness is to get children to start a story and trip-out of this logical world by asking silly questions and giving silly answers. Illustrate what you mean with this series of questions and answers:

A: Where are you going?
B: Nowhere.
A: I've been there. It's nothing.
B: Well I haven't been there and I intend to go.
A: Suit yourself.
B: And where are you going?
A: Somewhere.
B: Oh, I've been there.
A: And?
B: Oh, you'll see.
A: What? What will I see?
B: Somewhere.
A: Well at least I'll see that. You'll see nothing.
B: Well I've seen something but I've never seen nothing, so I intend to go Nowhere.
A: Suit yourself.

Proceed now to create nonsensical characters in the trip-out game. Mention to children such ridiculous possibilities as a cardboard tree that talks, a flower that walks and weeps, an earthworm that philosophizes on top of a rotten tomato, a squirrel that races through the woods but can never collect a nut, a two-colored butterfly that appears and disappears. Your main point is to stimulate a sense of nonsence. To get children eager to fantasize with these nonsensical characters, practice this little scene between the frantic squirrel who is unable to collect a nut and a two-colored butterfly who follows him but appears and disappears at will.

Squirrel: Oh, where shall I look? Where shall I run?
Butterfly: What is it you wish to find?
Squirrel: What else?
Butterfly: Well?
Squirrel: Nuts. Nuts. Nuts. What else should a squirrel race after, hide, store away until winter? What a silly butterfly you are!
Butterfly: What a silly squirrel you are. Whoever heard of a squirrel who couldn't find nuts? (The butterfly's right wing fades).
Squirrel: How can you fly with one wing?
Butterfly: I can fly with no wings. (The second wing fades).
Squirrel: You are no butterfly. You are a caterpillar.
Butterfly: You are no squirrel. You can't even find a nut.
Squirrel: Yes I can. Yes I can. (And with that the squirrel races about the woods. He is frantic). Where are the nuts? Where are the nuts? (He takes his front paws and hits his head. The butterfly appears in full again).
Butterfly: If you listen, I shall tell you where you can find some nuts.
Squirrel: Ah. You're here again, with two wings.
Butterfly: I've always had two wings. You just couldn't see. You can't even see the nuts.
Squirrel: What nuts? Where? Where?

Butterfly: Look. Look beneath the leaves in the corner of that three and you'll see. (Suddenly the butterfly disappears).
Squirrel: Which tree? Which tree? (And the squirrel races around the trees).

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Alice finds a contradictory world. Alice finds herself falling down a rabbit-hole into a deep well. "Down, down, down" [1] she falls until she finds herself "in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof" (p. 4). All around the hall were locked doors and Alice wondered "how she was ever to get out again" (p. 4).

"Who in the world am I?" (p. 9) asks Alice. For she finds herself small then large. Alice is in search of her right size. When the caterpillar asks her, "Who are *you*?" (p. 32), she can only reply, "I'm not myself" (p. 32). Her confusion comes from "being so many different sizes in a day" (p. 32).

This same world of contradictory conditions exists in *Through the Looking Glass* as Alice goes through the glass into a world of chess pieces. Her confusion increases as she loses her way in the labyrinth and finds herself back at the house. The Red Queen asks Alice, "Where do you come from" The Red Queen also snaps, "And where are you going" (p. 124)? Bewildered, Alice explains that she has lost her way.

Indeed Alice wants someone else to tell her which is the best way out of the woods. She meets Tweedledum and Tweddledee who do not help her out of the woods. Humpty Dumpty proves to be "unsatisfactory" (p. 175). The Lion and the Unicorn fight and do not help her. The White Knight tumbles off his horse as does a Red Knight. Both fail to lead Alice out of the woods. Lost, Alice must find herself—a contradictory condition. Falling, Alice must rise. As a Pawn, Alice must move herself. Between the White Queen and the Red Queen Alice finds herself pushed upwards. She rises to consciousness and is out of the chess game, out of the woods, out of the world of contradictory conditions. Or is she?

Nonsense rules in the *Alice* books. Without the illogical quips, the logic of the child's perception might not be as vivid. Without the nonsensical punning and word play, the sense of a child's demand for clarity might not be as magnified. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* Alice finds herself facing the petulant Queen of a pack of cards. When the Queen is displeased with Alice's insolence, "like a wild beast" (p. 61) the Queen screams, "Off with her head!"

"Nonsense!" retorts Alice in a loud, firm manner, magnifying the nonsense of the Queen's repetitious terror-order, "Off with their heads!" (p. 61)

In *Through the Looking-Glass* the Red Queen calls a hill a valley, and a garden a wilderness. Alice contradicts the Red Queen and tells her that "a hill *can't* be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense" (p. 125).

In short, Lewis Carroll's children's classic *Alice* books are golden oldies, startling in the worlds opened up to children: the world of contradictory conditions and the world of senseless sense. Alice's trips down

the rabbit-hole and through the looking-glass are more than adventures; they are a return to an earlier vision where the world is juxtaposed between two realities—the reality of a child growing in perception versus the reality of adults lost in deceptions.

Footnote

[1] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1865, 1971; rpt. New York: Bantam Classic edition, 1981), p. 3. All subsequent references from these novels will be from this edition and notated within the paper.

Pepper Worthington teaches at Mount Olive College in North Carolina

New from NCTE

Wresch, *The Computer in Composition Instruction*
Olson, *Writing Centers: Theory and Administration*
Thaiss and Suhor, *Speaking and Writing, K-12*
Moss, *Focus Units in Literature*
Kahn, Walter, Johannessen, *Writing About Literature*

Mathematics in Literature: The Phantom Tollbooth

Dan Gross

Many students perceive learning mathematics as a teacher-directed process of memorizing facts, algorithms, and theorems. There is literature, however, enjoyed by adults and children alike, in which mathematical ideas are woven into interesting stories. One such story is *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by Norton Juster (Random House, 1961).

Most mathematics teachers associate Norton Juster with *The Dot and the Line* (Random House, 1963), a delightful romance about a straight line that yearns for the affection of a perfectly shaped circle. Less known to these teachers is his earlier work, *The Phantom Tollbooth*. This book is a children's classic in the tradition of *Alice in Wonderland*. Juster draws on the many misconceptions students have of mathematics and uses the percise language of mathematics to develop a portion of his story.

The Phantom Tollbooth concerns a boy named Milo who never knows what to do with himself. He takes a mystical trip with two friends, a ticking watchdog named Tock and a little Humbug. The journey takes the three adventurers to a place in The Lands Beyond. Their mission is to rescue "Sweet Rhyme" and "Princess of Pure Reason" from the "Castle in the Air." To reach the Castle, near the "Mountains of Ignorance," they must visit many towns and borroughs in the "Kingdom of Wisdom."

Such places as the town of "Dictionopolis," the "foothills of confusion," and the municipality of "Digitopolis" form the setting for Juster's story. Milo learns for example, that it is in Dictionopolis where all the words in the world are made, and that in Digitopolis numbers are more precious than gems. Milo's adventures in Digitopolis are a mathematics teacher's dream come true.

As a mathematics teacher I am always searching for new ways of introducing or reinforcing mathematical concepts. Reading portions of *The Phantom Tollbooth* in an elementary or middle school class and discussing Milo's confusions and incongruent logic may give students the opportunity to express their own understanding of the content explored. Milo's visit to Digitopolis may be used to study three mathematical ideas: measurement, number awareness, and problem solving.

• *Measurement.* On the road to Digitopolis Milo and his friends come upon the following road sign:

DIGITOPOLIS
5 Miles
1,600 Rods
8,800 Yards
26,400 Feet
316,800 Inches
633,600 Half inches

They want to know how to travel. The Humbug wants to travel by miles because it appears shorter and Milo wants to travel by half inches

because it appears quicker. What should your students tell them? Have your students explain why the Humbug and Milo may have made the decision they did. What is wrong with their logic?

We often are exposed to data presented as averages. Mathematically, we know that an average is the sum of the values of the data divided by the number of pieces of data. But what does "average" really mean? In Milo's journey he meets an average child, .58 child to be exact, because the average family has 2.58 children. The average family also owns 1.3 automobiles, of which the .3 automobile is driven by the .58 child for he is the only one who can fit into it.

Do averages really work that way? Milo was confused and your students may be also. How would they feel about the following situation? "Think of the poor farmer when it doesn't rain all year; if there wasn't an average rainfall of 37 inches in this part of the country, all of his crops would wither and die." (p. 196)

Discuss with your students the uses of averages as presented in the story. What is incorrect with what Milo has encountered? Are averages always the best way to measure the "middle" value? What other means may be helpful?

• *Number Awareness.* Milo, like many students, is fascinated with numbers, although he is not always sure of their use or importance. Sometimes he knows the response he wants, but does not know how to ask the question correctly. In Digitopolis Milo meets the Mathemagician who is the keeper of the number mine. Milo asks the Mathemagician to show him the "biggest number there is. Milo was shown a very tall "3"; not what he wanted, so he asked to see the "longest" number. Again, he did not get the desired response. He finally asked to see the "largest" number, and again he did not see what he wanted.

What was Milo asking for? Is there such a number? If your students suggest "infinity," read them the discussion of infinity on pages 190-192. Juster has provided a beautiful description of infinity that includes notions of the very largest and the very smallest.

During a tour of the number mine, Milo was given many digits to examine. While holding these precious stones, Milo dropped one of them and it broke in two pieces. Milo quickly overcame his concern when the Mathemagician told him not to worry, for "we use the broken ones for fractions." (p. 180)

What a wonderful opening for a discussion about fractions. What are fractions? What meaning of "fraction" did the Mathemagician imply? Have students examine the various meanings of words found in mathematics such as: "like," "prime," and "sign."

• *Problem Solving.* Students often get bogged down with word problems, especially those which begin: "If two cars leave the same city at different times. . . ." They may get a little respite from their misery if you read them the following passage:

> If a small car carrying three people at thirty miles an hour for ten minutes along a road five miles long at 11:35 in the morning starts

> at the same time as three people who have been traveling in a little automobile at twenty miles an hour for fifteen minutes on another road exactly twice as long as one half the distance of the other, while a dog, a bug, and a boy travel an equal distance in the same time or the same distance in equal time along a third road in Mid-October, then which one arrives first and which is the best way to go? (p. 174)

If your students still complain that they are not good at solving word problems, the following excerpt may help them see the usefulness of such problems.

> Why, did you know that if a beaver two feet long with a tail a foot and a half long can build a dam twelve feet high and six feet wide in two days, all you would need to build Boulder Dam is a beaver sixty-eight feet long with a fifty-one foot tail. (p. 174)

Ask your students to relate their own experiences involving word problems. What aspects of the problem solving process do most of your students find difficult? What strategies can they suggest that might help them in attacking word problems.

Using books such as *The Phantom Tollbooth* provides an alternative way of teaching mathematics. Such books can make what is often perceived as a boring topic an exciting adventure.

Ena Gross is assistant professor of mathematics education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Spring 1985 issue of *Virginia English Bulletin* will focus on what we've learned about the teaching of writing. Manuscripts should be sent to:

Dr. Patricia P. Kelly, Guest Editor
College of Education
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

A FAREWELL TO ARMS for the Post-Vietnam Generation: Teaching a Process for Literary Analysis

[illegible]

For my community college students, mostly a generation who do not remember large-scale war, understanding A FAREWELL TO ARMS requires background information. I believe appreciation of a work and of the process of literary analysis requires depth of treatment; I assume that these students will learn more about fiction by close study of A FAREWELL TO ARMS than from perusal of several short stories, or even from reading two novels. By the end of the course, the class *as a whole* knows perhaps what we would like a senior English major or graduate student to know about A FAREWELL TO ARMS, but each person also knows about the process of reading literature for depth of understanding. The procedure's seven steps cover eight weeks. Students, having spent two weeks reading short fiction and discussing some elements of fiction for the stories:

1. read a plot summary
2. answer 34 study questions while reading A FAREWELL TO ARMS for the first time
3. complete one of three dozen background research projects
4. discuss six lists of passages for theme, symbolism, and style
5. read and discuss sample student essays on the novel
6. view and discuss a movie version of A FAREWELL TO ARMS
7. write a final analytical essay working from a list of two dozen professional and student thesis ideas.

The plot summary illustrates to students that they must interpret events, not just parrot them back, to write analytically. The plot summary also allows students who wish to do so to read the novel with an awareness of how it ends and what its significant events are. Such a preview can limit the suspense of the novel, so I warn students about that when I offer the summary for homework. It is helpful after the student has read the novel. I also decry the simplistic, off-the-rack study notes students sometimes pick up. Such study notes are outdated, foster the use of glib catch-phrases, and are incomplete in covering the plot.

Next, students read through the novel using a set of 34 study questions that ask them to make inferences based on details of plot, character, and dialogue. They must speculate, for instance, on what Lt. Frederic Henry means when he tells Catherine Barkley that he never loved anyone. They must later decide why they do or do not believe Frederic when he tells readers that he is in love with Catherine. Students must also distinguish among the varied views of war proclaimed by the ambulance drivers, the surgeon, the priest, a frequently decorated soldier, and Lt. Henry. They must also characterize Hemingway's view as shown by the actions he depicts, such as Lt. Henry's unheroic wounding while scroung-

ing a spaghetti dinner. Such questions go beyond who does what to ask why characters do and say things; answers discussed in class demonstrate how students add up details to make reasonable inferences. These inferences are the beginnings of a thematic analysis, which is refined later in a second set of study sheets. Such questions are also more involving than mere detail questions, so they help students chart their personal reactions to A FAREWELL TO ARMS.

As students are reading the novel and answering this first set of study questions, we spend class time in the library on specific background research projects on World War I, European geography, treatment of wounded soldiers, methods of childbirth, and Hemingway himself. Students have the option of revising and consolidating or supplementing reports, saved with permission, from previous classes. Students may also start from scratch on a topic. Over the years, I have assembled source material through inter-library loan and purchase that would be unavailable in an ordinary two-year-college library. Less ambitious students may take a topic for which information is readily available; more ambitious and highly interested students will draw from city, county, and state libraries as well as private and corporate libraries that they have access to.

Students work singly or in pairs on questions concerning the infant mortality rate during childbirth in 1918, the retreat from Caparetto and other military events of the Italian front (and how Hemingway fictionalized the chronology to some extent), the causes and results of World War I, the geography of northern Italy and southern Switzerland (including specific cities seen in the novel and whether it is plausible that a man could row from Stresa, Italy, to Brissago, Switzerland, with a pregnant woman and during a storm). Since we all later contrast a movie version of A FAREWELL TO ARMS with the book, one or more students may research the Hollywoodization of the story. The most popular biographical topics involve Hemingway's marriages and his apparent suicide, especially as reported in THE NEW YORK TIMES for July and August of 1961.

These projects show something to students about editorial work, such as use of anecdotes to enliven writing in history and biography, use of maps to clarify geography and military history, and especially how to resolve differences in reports that were written by two different writers using similar research materials. This process also shows students the importance of placing a work in its era while letting it transcend that era thematically. During class discussions on the armistice (especially as portrayed in the 1932 movie) or on Swiss neutrality and how it affects Catherine and Frederic, students can depend on each other as "class experts" for that topic. Finally, even the students who depend on reserve materials, and who never get beyond the bibliography of locally available materials that I provide, still advance beyond the image of research held by novice researchers—that truth resides in books alone (not periodicals) and that checking one bibliography (usually a card catalog) is enough to find answers.

When students have gotten back their written answers to the first set of study questions, we review the class's answers to demonstrate levels of insight. For instance, when we discuss why Catherine yields to Frederic, who seems only to be playing a game with her, one level of insight sees the guilt that motivates Catherine, a guilt over withholding marriage and probably love-making from her fiance of eight years who had been killed a few months before Catherine met Frederic. Another level of insight reflects that she is not just trying to atone for her lost lover but that she actually hallucinates that Frederic is her lost lover, so in a way she is using him as much as he is using her—at first. Whether students agree with these insights matters less than their seeing how such notions could occur to careful readers based on the characters' actions and what they say.

The second—and more challenging—set of study questions focuses on themes, symbols, and writing styles in the book. Students receive six study sheets that list pages from the novel and topics discussed there or events depicted on the page. Their task is to find a pattern in the references, common ideas, common attitudes. Students search for a central meaning in the references to light and to dark, references to rain, references to "they" (which gradually broaden to cosmic scope by the end of the novel). Students also review a list of absurd and ironic occurrences and observations to see if a common view unites the slapstick and the sad ironies of the novel. Finally, students consider a list of passages that are exceptional for their stylistic differences from the normal narrative of the text.

During class students form groups to discuss the study page they prefer and groups report on their findings. Customarily, relevant insights from the first study questions pop up. The significant effects of having been through the novel twice seem to be considerable familiarity with the plot and the general ability to find supplemental passages to support an interpretation of the novel's themes or symbolism. Eventually, we discuss all six lists of page references, but we don't necessarily agree on a single pattern for light vs. dark, for rain as symbol, for war weariness and disillusionment, for the identity of "they," for stream of consciousness and other stylistic effects, or for the comic and tragic ironies in the novel.

After our discussion of this second set of study items, we see either the 1932 movie with Helen Hayes and Gary Cooper or the 1958 movie with Jennifer Jones and Rock Hudson, depending upon availability and time. Students, who are now familiar with the plot structure and have just reviewed the summary of the book's plot, are astounded at the truncated and distorted plot of the 1932 version; they are usually surprised by the dashing heroism of the lieutenant's wounding in the 1958 movie. Students also see the conventional symbolism attempted in the 1932 version (such as a "crucified" wounded soldier). After we discuss some of the flaws and attributes of the movie version, students generally see why Hemingway disliked Hollywood's shortcuts and sentimentality. Usually, students gain more respect for Hemingway's emotional restraint.

For a final paper, students use one of several professional or student thesis ideas on A FAREWELL TO ARMS from a list I have assembled over the years. Students will have seen some sample student essays, such as on the rain symbolism or the ironies of the novel, but I do not encourage students at this level to wade through the prose of professional critics. Yet students can, by this time, see merit in many of the thesis ideas of the professional critics. From class discussions of the novel and of how to handle the study questions, students realize that they must detail their interpretations plausibly because other readers may vary in their view of the same character actions and dialogue.

To tolerate all of this work, students must see some return from the novel and their class's experience of it. What interests them most, of course, is the love story. Its twists and reverses, the subtle games, the guilt and sacrifices, the lack of shame and the stealth involved, and the final irony of the symbolic stillbirth all involve students in one of the most crucial questions of life—What is love? The anti-war aspect of the novel, students often see, bespeaks a civilization disillusioned by its violence upon itself, so the questions of life's purpose and one's role in one's culture also emerge from this novel. For students trying to begin a career or change one, these are important questions. But ultimately, students work hard to understand this novel because A FAREWELL TO ARMS is a story well told of people living in the midst of world-wide catastrophe, doing what they can against the odds. The reward of such hard work on such an engaging novel is a depth of understanding for the purposes of literature and for ways to read a novel as a personal and cultural document.

Eric Hibbison is associate professor of English at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.

NCTE Achievement Awards in Writing, 1985

Nominations due by January 23, 1985
For further information, contact:
National Council of Teachers of English
1111Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

Aesthetic Experiences: Drawing, Writing, Teaching Literature

Joan W. Brown

In *Literature as Experience* (1983), Louise Rosenblatt argues that reading is an aesthetic experience and that the role of the teacher is to help students better understand and relate that experience to other ones that the students have had. I realized recently, as I spent some time working on a sketch for a friend, why I already agreed with Rosenblatt's point.

When I draw, I don't consciously analyze my subject, beyond determination of general proportions and overall outlines. Once I have completed this planning, I try to adhere to Betty Edward's technique (1979). Whether working from a still life, model, or photograph, I let my brain shift from the controlled analysis of the left brain to the intuitive sensitivity of the right. I draw only what my eye sees and not what I know should be there.

Like my sketching, my creative writing occurs intuitively, more as a right-brained than left-brained activity. I don't believe that writing happens mystically although I have taught many students who do. I know that my attempts at literary discourse—all unpublished and, therefore, undiscovered—involve more than my taking the dictation of the muse who sits upon my shoulder and whispers in my ear.

While I do try to structure my writing, I don't make elaborate outlines or specific notes about which symbols I want to use, where I feel metonomy will be appropriate, or when I should impress my reader with an oxymoron. Instead, I start with the germ of an idea. I sometimes tinker with it on paper, but other times I rehearse it mentally, asking what if questions about my characters, plots, settings. In both my drawing and creative writing, I make a great many discoveries, often by experimental accident.

As a writer, I hope to impart my vision of human experience to a reader whom I will probably never meet. Although I can fancy myself accepting a National Book Award or Newbery medal, I cannot imagine myself ever meeting a reader who dissected my writing with the precision of many literature teachers. As a writer, I often struggle to create verbal images that convey my characters' experiences to a reader. I suspect that other writers do similar battle to create their precise images. Other writers may also let their work develop from a generalized vision to finely crafted, precisely worded work. As both writer and teacher, I abhor the dissection of literature in the name of teaching literary appreciation.

Because literature is synergistic, a miserly scrutiny of its component parts—often leading to heated arguements over the meaning of single words, symbols, or images—becomes a distraction from the overall impact of the work. For example, the supposed discussion of *The Scarlet Letter* may become a lecture on "what Hawthorne really meant to write." I don't deny that authors use symbols or figures of speech. These components are as much a part of the overall literary composition as value, balance, and rhythm are to my sketching. Full understanding of literature involves decoding these devices, but not to the exclusion of the overall design of the work. To classify and compartmentalize each element of a work of imaginative literature is to see not the painting but the artist's brushwork. Such precise literary criticism, which presents yet another novel interpretation of Poe's "The Raven," denies the emotional experience of sharing Poe's vision of grief and lost love.

Because I enjoy my own attempts at creating imaginative literature, I also appreciate the efforts of others who have succeeded not only in crafting poetry or fiction but also in having it published. When I teach literature to college freshmen, I try to emphasize the overall aesthetic experience rather than teaching the works as though they were a body of content to be mastered. I

also recognize that the freshman literature course is, unfortunately, the last opportunity that many students will have to read imaginative literature or to read for pleasure. I look upon the course as a personal challenge to make reading both meaningful and pleasurable for these students.

Although class discussion appears to be spontaneous, both the students and I use a structured pattern to prepare for class. At the end of the class period before the students read a work, I present them with a single question to focus their reading. For example, when we will discuss Graham Greene's short story "The Destructors" on Thursday, I ask the students at the end of Tuesday's class to consider the differences between destructing and destroying and between being a destructor and a destroyer. As the students read or when they finish reading each work, I require them to write a reader-response journal and bring it, along with their texts, to class. The journal, based upon Bleich's (1975) principles of subjective criticism, is a method for students to record their immediate emotional responses to the works read and to find an initial explanation for the responses, find associations that connect the experience of the literary work with the students' experiences, and a feature that attracts the student's attention in some way. I also encourage sudents to record questions that occur during the reading.

The journals serve as starting points for the exploration of literature. As Miller (1980) points out, literature is an event, an object, and a message. The journal helps students to recall the event of creating the whole piece as they read.

My own preparation includes both reading the text and completing a response journal. Because my experience broadens with time, I complete a new journal for each piece, although I may have read and taught it previously. In addition, I read background information on the publication history of the work, critical articles, look up words, and try to anticipate student questions.

I then use this work to formulate both the focusing question and a series of questions using Christenbury and Kelly's (1983) "questioning circle." I present the first question before the students read. Using Christenbury and Kelly's model, I develop questions referring to the text, the students' experience, and the broader implications and applications of the piece of literature to the world at large. During the discussion period, I may draw upon these questions to promote the students' inductive exploration of the literature, but I prefer not to ask them directly.

Last spring when we discussed "The Destructors" in class, the students brought out several points. At first, they asked why would a group of adolescents carefully dismantle an architectually historic house without wanting to harm its owner. One student suggested that Trevor, the gang leader, felt society had robbed his father of a position as an architect. When asked for support, the student found both the editor's footnote on the significance of the upper class name, Trevor, and, more importantly, a line in the text that supported the interpretation. The students worked for the entire class period, discussing points and responding to each other, until they discovered some answers to their own questions. The process took time, but the students seemed rewarded at the end of the period. When the teacher selects literature that appeals to the students' experiences and assists the students in making connections between the literature and those experiences, the approach can work with students of all levels.

The class discussions are non-threatening to the students because we explore possible meanings rather than pursue a single REAL or TRUE MEANING. Students' questions and reactions often open up new meaning within the literature for me too. I now trust the students to raise the same issues and cover the literature just as thoroughly in their inductive discussion as I would in a meticulously prepared deductive lecture. Each term, students tell me how even the works they read in high school and reread for the course have taken on new meanings for them. And it's not unusual for several students to comment

that some of the literature is "the best I've ever read." My greatest reward, however, is hearing the students continue their discussion with each other as they stroll out of class.

References

Bleich, David. *Readings and Feelings: An Introduction to Subjective Criticism.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1975.

Christenbury, Leila A. and Patricia P. Kelly. *Questioning: The Path to Critical Thinking.* ERIC/RCS Theory and Research Into Practice (TRIP) Monograph Series. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1983.

Edwards, Betty. *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain: A Course in Enhancing Creativity and Artistic Confidence.* Los Angeles: J. P. Tarcher, inc. 1979.

Miller, Bruce E. *Teaching the Art of Literature.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1980.

Rosenblatt, Louise M. *Literature as Exploration,* 3rd. ed. New York: Modern Language Association, 1983.

John Swope teaches at Lansing Community College in Lansing, Michigan.

Help us find disabled children whose "Yes I Can" attitudes have resulted in triumphs large or small.

Michael Learned Honorary Chairwoman
Foundation for Exceptional Children

If you'd like an exceptional child to have a Certificate of Accomplishment write:
"YES I CAN!"
foundation for exceptional children
1920 association dr., reston VA 22091

space donated as a public service by this publication

48

An Approach to Teaching and Writing Poetry

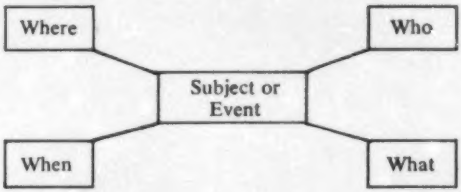
MICHAEL SHEDDY

Over the past school year, I have developed an effective strategy for analyzing certain types of poems that is challenging and fun for the junior high school student as well as an effective process writing technique for composing poetry. I select a number of poems that are ideal for gleaning information on the four *W*'s: the *who, where, when,* and *what* of the poem.

First, the students isolate specific details that refer directly to the *who* or *who's* implied or stated in the poem. This method inevitably precipitates a lively discussion of the speaker as a person, a concept new to many of them. Next, they list particular facts about the other three *W*'s, leaving the most difficult *W* for last—the *what* of the poem. And here I must caution them, for the *what* of a poem often operates on two different levels: the surface or factual level and the deep or philosophical level. The surface level of Robert Frost's " 'Out, Out,' " for example, describes the sudden death of a young boy after his hand is accidentally amputated by a buzz saw. The deeper, more philosophical level deals primarily with the rather flimsy, insubstantial hold that he or, for that matter, any one of us has on life.

A detailed examination first of the *who, where,* and *when* of the poem allows the students to grasp the casual and mundane setting in which the poignantly tragic event is framed, locating it around supper time in the rural countryside. The setting, analyzed through the three *W*'s, acts as a kind of foil against which the shocking suddenness of the boy's untimely death is artfully juxtaposed. By first solidly establishing character and setting, the larger *what* of the poem is thereby illumined. Of course, the more anxious students will attempt to blurt out, before they have fully learned the rules of the game, the *what* of the poem. Without sufficiently examining details, they hope to secure a certain victory before the game is played out. They soon realize that if they hope to unravel the poem's deep-level meaning, they must account for a larger number of specific details than they had at first anticipated. They acknowledge that the facts must be clearly established as the groundwork for their higher level inferences.

After students become adequately acquainted with the four *W*'s analysis approach, I introduce a brainstorming, mapping technique for generating poems of their own. Below is a simple illustration for mapping the *who, where, when,* and *what* of the subject or event they will later fashion into a poem.



Once students have decided on a topic of personal significance, they concentrate on writing, by branching out from each rectangle, specific concrete details that vividly develop each *W*. When they have completed their maps, their diagram is sprawling with detail. To succeed, their selection of details should distinctly reveal to the reader all there is to know or feel about the poem.

After their maps are completed, the students begin structuring their specific details into sentences. They now have the clay out of which they can sculpt their poem. Since their details are already loosely organized for them by the map, they need primarily to concentrate on expressing these details in rhythmic structures. I also insist that they repress any inclination to create rhymes that too often misdirect their initial intentions and distract from concerns of rhythm.

Because the cumulative sentence is a vital tool for sentence generation, I prefer to teach the poetry unit in conjunction with or shortly after teaching this structure. The cumulative sentence is a powerful rhetorical device that helps the students sustain their concentration on an uninterrupted flow of ideas, emotions, images, and actions. It requires their thoughts to move forward from a very general perception, stated in the base clause, to a below-the-surface detailed examination of related thoughts. Each succeeding phrase elaborates on and qualifies the preceding structures, all the way back to, either directly or indirectly, the base clause itself. This type of sentence permits the students a freedom and rhythmic grace rarely found in more tightly bound linguistic structures (for more on the cumulative sentence, consult the works of Francis Christensen).

Once they have sufficiently experimented with their cumulative sentence structures (some of them even diagram their own sentences to identify the various levels of phrasal specificity), I introduce, through models, several ways of breaking the lines. They analyse, on the overhead, a number of ways a poet may line a poem (by metrics, concrete shaping, images, etc.), and his purpose for the particular arrangement. This activity provides them with several lining options from which to choose as they begin lining their own poems.

After devising a lining scheme for their poems, students exchange papers and peer evaluate, employing the four *W*'s format we used when evaluating poems by professional poets. At the conclusion of the peer evaluation process, students go over their editor's comments and then rewrite their poems.

Finally, I select some of the students' poems for overhead scrutiny. I ask students not to title their poems if the title is *too* revealing. The concrete details in the poem should assure clarity of meaning. There is no need in a truly good poem for the language to wax expository. The poem should speak for itself. It should be, as Archibald Macleish says in "Ars Poetica" as:

> . . . palpable and mute as a globed fruit
> Dumb
> As old medallions to the thumb

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone
Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

I have included below poems written by two of my eighth grade students that express the development of the four *W*'s and the use of the cumulative sentence. In the first poem, the *who, where, when,* and surface-level *what* ("the symbol of finality") are introduced by cumulative structures. The last two sentences establish the deep-level *what*—the child's realization that her family's grief and her own is not universally shared. The other poem captures the full spectacle of life at a rock concert. By means of cumulative structures, the first and last sentences rhythmically sustain an uninterrupted flow of images and actions with photographic clarity.

That Saturday,
Two hours after noon,
Such a sharp, cold, and windy day
For the middle of September,
Great Grandmother crossed over Jordan,
And I,
Just a wondering nine-year-old child,
Knowing nothing of these things.
Great Grandfather looked stunned,
In the shaded part of Resurrection Garden,
Glancing over at the symbol of finality,
Allowing the brisk wind to rush in on his face.
My mother wept,
Sitting solemnly,
Eyes fixed on the box.
I was just a nine-year-old child,
Sensing real darkness
For the first time in my life,
And then it happened,
As we slowly departed,
Behind me, the delver's voice,
"Another one down!"
At nine, I couldn't understand
Such things.

by Rhonda Cheatham

On that Friday,
inside the echoing, austerely architectured,
white dome,
the crowd's voices blended
into one voice,
as cameras flashed,
and plain-clothed ushers directed
late arrivals.
Frisbees were flung from balcony to balcony
to pass the time.
And then the lights dimmed;
Soaring frisbees suddenly disappeared;
Complete silence filled the dome,
and the loud clatter of applauding began,

ceasing only when the far away figure
appeared on stage,
dressed in a pink tie
and orange, high-top Converse tennis shoes.
By Carolyn Burnett

Michael Segedy is a former middle school teacher in Virginia Beach. He now teaches in the American School of Lima, Peru.

WHIM IV
HUMOR ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES
CALL FOR PAPERS

The fourth international WHIM humor conference will be held on the campus of Arizona State University from March 29 to April 1, 1985. The deadline for proposals, on any aspect of "Humor Across the Disciplines" is December 1, 1985. Proposals must include 1) a title, 2) a cross-referenced interdisciplinary subject, 3) a one-page abstract, and 4) a $35.00 registration fee. Extracts of your presentation will appear in WHIMSY IV which you will receive as part of your registration fee. Send to D.L.F. Nilsen, English Dept., Arizonia State University, Tempe, AZ 85287.

A Plea for Fantasy and Science Fiction Reading

Emily L. Wood

At some time during our hectic lives, we all need to get outside ourselves, to dream, and to fantasize. Adolescents, especially, may find their world overwhelming, and want to visit an imaginary land. To escape? Yes, certainly one cannot deny this aspect of science fiction and fantasy stories. But more importantly, this genre prevents us from accepting the directions of the present world as the only possibilities. Readers of these stories are indirectly encouraged to examine the world around them, to find similarities and differences between the real and proposed worlds, and to face their own world's problems with the courage of these protagonists. Educators who maintain that science fiction, fantasy, and utopia stories discourage students from facing reality by encouraging them to live in a dream world have not read enough, or they would recognize the virtues of this literary form.

Few could argue that Antoine de Saint-Exupery wrote a meaningless children's story about a prince from another planet. Although it can be read purely for enjoyment, *The Little Prince* contains many lessons about contemporary society. It offers advice for the reader and was written in the hope that today's values will not spiral ever downward. Like all fantasy stories, *The Little Prince* presents a character with admirable values whose beliefs resemble prophecy.

Both fantasy and science fiction examine the world and criticize the selfishness that results in the Earth's slow destruction. Ray Bradbury, in *The Martian Chronicles*, develops these themes because he cares about the negative results of our over-technologically advanced progress. Other science fiction writers deal with the themes of over population and nuclear progress in the hope of bettering people's goals.

While both fantasy and science fiction can examine and criticize contemporary society, both can also build a foundation rather than stripping down our current values. For example, in her Earthsea Trilogy, Ursula K. Le Guin creates a world where heroes and heroines are found, where maturity and responsibility are necessary to face the challenge of conquering evil to maintain good. Le Guin continues the tradition of didactic fantasy literature: just as her characters must develop qualities of patience, persistence, and honesty in order to succeed, so should her readers admire and work toward such positive characteristics. Ged, the protagonist of *A Wizard of Earthsea*, overcomes physical and emotional obstacles; consequently the reader uses him as a role model.

Utopias offer the possibility of a better world, while dystopias warn us of a drifting society. Through foreboding and admonishment, both types of writing offer solutions and encourage turning away from artificiality in our values. By identifying with the characters of utopias, science fiction, and fantasy, readers can enrich their own lives by gaining new perspectives.

Fantasy literature does not squandor valuable time—it teaches role models, encourages emotional independence, presents a positive set of values, and offers new perspectives on the nature of human experience. Readers are stimulated to actively participate in the author's creative thinking, thereby developing intellectual skills often neglected in junior and senior high schools. Fantasy, science fiction, and utopia stories exercise students' creative capabilities.

Emily Wood has been a student at the College of William and Mary.

War, Literature, and the Adolescent

David Dolan

There are very few things as universal as war. It is difficult to watch the news or read the paper without being reminded that people somewhere, whether it is in Latin America, the Middle East, Ireland or elsewhere, are fighting and dying for a country or a cause. It is for this reason war has pervaded all forms of mass media. Over 800 movies dealing specifically with war in the last fifty years.

Warfare has also been used extensively as a literary theme, for it has the ability to magnify all realms of human experience and emotion. War is a subject in *The Bible* and in the mythologies of both the Greeks and the Romans. It is no wonder some of the best works of literature deal with man and the way he faces war. These works have been written by both combatant and non-combatant alike, and include such classics as: Homer's *Iliad*, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun, and* Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Sun Also Rises*.

Yet most of today's adolescents appear to be unaware or indifferent to the real pain and horror of war, even though it is the young adult who has traditionally fought and died in most wars. The adolescents' attitudes toward war seem marked by ambiguity. On one hand they know war means death to many people and they have a tendency to rebel against the military establishment. But on the other, they are often seduced by the romanticism of war and the "old lie" that it is noble and glorious to die for one's country. The teacher has a duty to educate the student to the actualities of war. Although the next major war may be fought in a number of hours rather than years, students should be made aware of what war can be like.

Perhaps the best known war novel is Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, probably the most widely read and taught war novel in junior high and high schools. In my experience adolescents, especially in the lower grades, finish the novel without a clear idea of the many subtle themes which are found within. One effective way of revealing these themes is through the use of supplemental texts and literature in which the themes may be less obscure than those found in the works of Hemingway and Remarque. For older students, I would recommend Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, a moving yet funny story which takes a look at the insanity and absurdity of war through the use of black humor, satire and surrealism. It is the story of a WWII pilot who wants to be declared insane so that he can go home. To be declared crazy, one cannot want to go home; the establishment makes you stay, hence the catch-22. Another incident used to show the lunacy of war is Milo Minderbinder's contract-bombing of his own air base for a tremendous profit. I would also offer Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, the story of a soldier who becomes the ultimate "basket-case" as a result of the war.

No unit dealing with war would be complete without a close examination of war poetry. Some of the most effective contemporary war poetry has been written by Isaac Rosenberg, Robert Graver, Seigfried Sassoon, and Wilfred Owen, all of whom served in World War I. Although killed in action at the age of twenty-five, seven days before the Armistice was signed, Wilfred Owen was probably one of the best war poets to have lived, both in content and literary quality.

For the younger adolescent, I would recommend a number of excellent novels in which the themes are rather explicit. They also maintain a high level of interest without sacrificing quality. At the top of the list would be John Knowles' *A Separate Peace*. It is the story of Gene Forrester, a sixteen-year-old student at Devon and his best friend Phineas. *A Separate Peace*

traces their struggles with friendship, loyality, and responsibility during the early years of World War II.

Next on the list would be *April Morning* by Howard Fast. It is the story of fifteen-year-old Adam Cooper who in less than forty-eight hours becomes a man when he witnesses the horrors of war: he sees his father shot, and then he flees during the battle of Lexington and Concord.

Perhaps the best war novelist for young adults is James Forman. He has written many excellent books on different aspects of war situations, yet all deal with the courage and struggles of the individual. Most of his books deal with World War II: *The Traitor, Horses of Anger,* and *Ceremony of Innocence. Ceremony of Innocence* is the true story of a brother and sister, Hans and Sophie Scholl, who began to produce leaflets during 1942 denouncing Nazism, and their imprisonment. Not all of his stories take place during WWII; for example, *Ring the Judas Bell* is set during the civil war in Greece in the 1940's, and *A Fine Soft Day* is the story of the O'Brien family and their struggles against the violence and bloodshed which they are a part of as the war in Northern Ireland rages on.

In addition to the many fine novels and plans about war, it might be interesting to both students and the teacher to compare and contrast the war themes found in music and lyrics with those found in novels and poetry. Pink Floyd, The Police, The Who, U2, and Bob Marley are but a few contemporary musicians who have made statements about war in their music.

David Dolde is a student at the College of William and Mary.

1985 VATE CONFERENCE

The 1985 VATE Conference will be held in October in Virginia Beach at the Pavilion Tower. Watch *The Needle's Eye* for more information, and begin making plans to attend the conference.

Using Virginia Locales for Literature Study

Visiting a site associated with a literary work or personality is an effective strategy to motivate students to read good literature. Or, changing the sequence, a field trip at the conclusion of a unit often serves to enhance the impact of the work and to foster a greater appreciation of the writer.

As a first year high school teacher in my native New Hampshire, I hardly appreciated the surfeit of locations that surrounded me and provided connection with some classic prose and poetry. In an hour or less, my students could visit Hawthorne's House of Seven Gables in Salem or Thoreau's Walden Pond; they could walk the Boston streets of the fictional Johnny Tremain or explore Robert Frost's farm in Derry, New Hampshire, where he did the core of his writing.

And so with a bit of youthful arrogance and a lot of Yankee snobbery, I viewed my move the next year to Virginia as the unavoidable end to my intentions of incorporating field trips into my instructional units in literature. After all, where would one take an English class in Virginia?

I am still discovering fascinating spots! For example, this spring at the end of a poetry unit, thirty talented eighth graders and I made the short drive to Chatham in Stafford County to "Walk Where Whitman Walked," as I named the trip in a fit of alliterative zeal. Upon reading that his brother had been injured in the Civil War fighting near Fredericksburg, Walt Whitman traveled south to search among the many wounded in the area. After locating his brother, George Washington Whitman, the poet remained at Chatham, the Georgian mansion which served as Union headquarters, helping out by tending wounds and writing letters home for the soldiers. By students' mission was to walk the spacious grounds and throughout the mansion (now under the care of the National Park Service), trying to imagine the sights and sounds that the poet encountered and recorded in his book *The Wound Dresser* such as this graphic passage: "Outdoors, at the foot of a tree, within ten yards of the house, I notice a heap of amputated feet, legs, arms, and hands. . . . Several dead bodies lie near. . . ." The assignment that grew out of this field trip involved writing original poetry or historical fiction. In one moving account, a student took the role of an injured soldier for whom Whitman was writing home to inform the family of his bravery under fire.

Another Civil War battlefield, Chancellorsville, which is about ten miles west of Fredericksburg, could provide the inspiration students need to jump wholeheartedly into the important but demanding *The Red Badge of Courage*. While we can not prove that Stephen Crane actually visited Chancellorsville itself, there is considerable documentation that he traveled to Fredericksburg and other nearby towns to interview war veterans so that he could accomplish his goal of writing a real story of the Civil War. That Stephen Crane had never been in a battle and yet could

come up with such realistic descriptions of warfare has continued to shock readers from the author's contemporary English critics and commentators to today's high school students. If you can get approval for a field trip to this location (also under the aegis of the National Park Service and open free of charge seven days a week), begin your visit by viewing the excellent twelve minute slide presentation which provides background on the war and orientation to the site. Opportunities for extending the Crane unit range from the ubiquitous historical fiction short story to a descriptive writing assignment which is based on another's experience, rather than the writer's, in order to underscore the author's superb accomplishment in *The Red Badge of Courage*.

Let us leave Civil War settings and go on to the Edgar Allan Poe Museum in Richmond. A visit to the museum, located on East Main Street and open every day except Christmas with group rates available, would make a memorable conclusion to a short story unit for middle school students or an exciting kick-off to an in depth Poe study by seniors in an advanced placement English class. Once back in the classroom, younger children will seldom need prodding to come up with their own scary tales. A post-instruction activity for senior high students might take the form of a writing contest for Poe imitators such as the famous annual Hemingway competition where writers attempt to duplicate the novelist's style.

You say the school board just gave the English Department an additional three thousand dollars to reward the staff for its dedication? Well, jump back on that bouncy yellow bus and hit the road in search of some other Virginia locales with literary ties. I plan to investigate soon several areas which might be of value in connection with some more modern titles. Southeastern Virginia, the setting for William Styron's Pulitzer Prize winning *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, and Spotsylvania County, home of Alex Haley's Kunta Kinte of *Roots*, are two places at the top of my list.

Kathleen Mahoney teaches at Edward E. Drew, Jr., Middle School in Stafford County.

I remember when I was in school that I always thought that my English teachers fell into one of two categories. One group loved to teach only grammar and the intricacies of diagramming and verb conjunction. The other group taught only literature. As a budding young "English intellectual," I naturally favored the literature teachers. However, after fourteen years in the classroom, I look back and realize that those teachers who seemed to teach *only* literature tricked me! They used literature as a vehicle for teaching all those other skills that I thought I was skipping. Ah, the insights of adulthood. . . .

As I reviewed the ideas for this issue, I was impressed with the creativity and excitement that teachers can instill in students as they explore literature. The techniques and approaches presented illustrate that usage, writing, reading, and oral communication come alive when they are integrated into a good literature lesson.

* * *

**With Great Expectations*

Suffering from the classic syndrome of disinterest for any novel printed in a textbook, ninth grade students at Manchester High School approached *Great Expectations* with these classic comments English teachers frequently hear:

"Do we *have* to read *that*?"

"Why are we reading that old thing?"

"Is it boring?"

"How long is it?"

The teacher's response to these questions usually sounded like a remedy for an illness. "Yes, you have to read this because it is good for you, and if you follow my directions, it will be over before you know it."

Challenged by this student apathy, most ninth grade teachers approached *Great Expectations* with the fervor of warriors going to battle, which would be fought in the classroom; and we all know who the real victims are there. Students were involved by researching to discover facts on Dickens' love life. Interest began to flicker over his infatuations with two of his sisters-in-law and his final affair with Ellen Ternan, an actress young enough to be his daughter. Students wanted to know more about this man who never overcame working in that horrible blacking factory during his early years. They laughed at a man who, as a boy, was more interested in reading a book than in eating.

Excitement was beginning to emerge. To keep this enthusiasm going, students were given several important scenes to dramatize. The opening scene, in which Pip meets his convict on the marshes, was dramatized in each class complete with leg irons and tombstone. This introduced the novel. Other scenes, such as Miss Havisham in a wedding dress with all sorts of jewelry, Herbert giving Pip a lesson on manners, Magwitch's returning to disclose his identity to Pip, and many others, were presented throughout the unit. Students were coming to class anxious to see what would happen next.

The final brainstorm to generate even more enthusiasm was to celebrate Charles Dickens' birthday in February. Most ninth grade classes planned a Victorian birthday party. Ideas for food came from the November-December,

1980 edition of Colonial Homes magazine. Students brought sugared nuts, marzipan, pound cakes with white icing, scones, fruits, trifle, and of course, hot tea to drink. Next each student was instructed to bring a birthday gift for this great author. After researching the Victorian period, students learned that gifts were given in small handmade bandboxes, and some students covered boxes in wallpaper or stenciled on wooden boxes to make a facsimile. Some gifts were unique. Charles Dickens received a brass etching, portraits of himself, a land grant, a replica of Pip's home at the forge complete with Tickler and the brown jug, an antique writing box, an ink press, poems, a sterling silver cookie press handcrafted by a student and his grandfather, and a certified divorce issued by the Church. Comical gifts were some black shoe polish from Warren's Blacking Factory, and a poster of Cheryl Ladd. (The student thought Dickens had bad taste in women.) Dickens received many feathered pens, ink wells, candles, and lamps. One student learned that Dickens enjoyed walking through London to get ideas for his writing and brought him a pair of shoes. Another student, whose grades had been poor due to lack of study, took time to cover a wooden cheese box in wallpaper. On the day of the celebration, the students brought their gifts accompanied by a paragraph describing the gift and giving the reasons for its appropriateness. As the class enjoyed the Victorian food, each student presented his gift to the class with a short speech. What a marvelous activity! Food, gifts, oral presentations, and a writing activity all combined.

As a unit clincher to put the novel in perspective, we viewed the state film. The unit ended with students' great expectations.

BETSY MURRAY
Manchester High School
Chesterfield County

* * *

**A Coded Message From Treasure Island*

This activity can be worked in with a number of units of study. We used it while reading TREASURE ISLAND with seventh graders.

The pupils were given a worksheet with a simple code on it. We used one with numbers in places of letters (1 for A, 2 for B, etc.) Then below the code was placed a secret message, having to do with the book the class was reading. 19-5-14-3 3-8-5-5-19-5 1-20 15-14-3-5. 2-5-14 7-21-14-14. (SEND CHEESE AT ONCE. BEN GUNN.)

After decoding that message, pupils were asked to make up a message of their own using one of the characters in the book. They could use the code provided or make up one of their own. If pupils made up their own codes, they were to provide necessary keys for decoding the message.

Then the fun began! Pupils were told that the coded message was to be written on something that could have been found on Treasure Island or on board the ship HISPANIOLA. On the day the assignment was due, a coded message came in on a log, a piece of a tattered "sail" or private shirt, a leaf, a seashell, a rock, a cannonball, a stick, a charred piece of wood from the pirates' fire, bottles of all kinds and shapes, a torn bit of papers from the ship's log, a gold coin from the treasure cache, etc.

On due date, pupils exchanged with one another to decode the message. Messages had been scratched on, written with red marker to stimulate blood, and written in charcoal. It was a worthwhile activity! All the pupils were reading and writing!

MARY M. BURMAN
Laramie Junior High School
Laramie, Wyoming

* * *

***Flowers For Algernon*

Before reading *Flowers for Algernon,* Honors students had an opportunity to hear our school psychologist explain the capabilities of people like Charlie. He helped the students gain some insight into what may have been Charlie's mental and emotional state both before and after his operation and, generally, better understand what is "normal" and how it is tested by a psychologist.

After reading the story, students formed discussion and research groups to learn more about what is "normal," and about intelligence and testing. After reporting factual information in panel form, students formed discussion groups to discuss their feelings and others' reactions to their intellectual capabilities.

NANCY MILLER
Midlothian Middle School
Chesterfield County

* * *

***Teaching Thoreau To General Students*

Reading the excerpt from Thoreau's *Walden* in a general level class is a challenge; although once the main idea is presented, students often have a lot to say. I try to show them how aphoristic and poetic *Walden* is by showing them several pictures I have cut from magazines and then asking them to supply an appropriate line. After we have done several of these in class, I assign them to choose a picture (or to do their own if they are so inclined) and to write a line from the text that best captures the mood or tone. Students then show their "posters" to the class, read the *Walden* passage, and explain the correlation or significance of what they have done. This often sparks more discussion and proceeding from several of these presentations, *Walden* manages to get itself taught.

Of course, when the presentations are finished, the best ones can then be displayed around the room. Knowing this in advance can often be an incentive to students to do well. Some of them are quite well done.

RAY GOSS
Manchester High School
Chesterfield County

* * *

***Writing for Discovery in I Am the Cheese*

Unravelling the mysterious past of Adam Farmer, the teenage protagonist in Cormier's *I Am the Cheese,* and discovering the purpose behind Adam's three year confinement, can be an exciting adventure and eye-opening revelation for students. However, unless they are allowed to formulate their own theories and elaborate on them, true self-discovery will never occur. With this in mind, I designed the following writing assignment.

Each student assumes the role of a computer technician contracted to repair the system at the institution where Adam is detained. Working late, he discovers a file unlocked and, rifling through it, uncovers some curious facts about the tapes.

Since each student is also an aspiring young writer, he periodically records his observations of the tapes in his diary. Each diary entry explores facets of Adam's repressed past as shards of his former life are divulged to the psychologist. Any part of the novel that relates directly to the sessions is considered part of the tapes.

MICHAEL SEGEDY
Virginia Beach

* * *

**A Reader's Delight*

William H. Armstrong has delighted many-a-heart with his novel, *Sounder*. This novel, recently serving as a class novel for my eighth grade English classes, evinced a stimulation never quite observed by me before this time among my students.

As a class, we read *Sounder* orally over a period of two weeks. Daily, we would read a chapter, or part of a chapter, and in turn, listen to the dramatization provided by school librarians.

Having devoured the novel so intently, my students seemed eager to continue its study. To accommodate, I created five group activities that worked extremely well. The "homeless" characters in Armstrong's novel serve as the focal point of these activities:

Group 1—Rewrite the novel in a shorter array, changing the race of the characters.
Group 2—Rewrite the novel in a shorter array, changing the ages of the characters.
Group 3—Create a new beginning to the novel.
Group 4—Create a new conclusion to the novel.
Group 5—Rewrite the novel in a shorter array, basing it on a contemporary setting with contemporary characters.

There are many activities that lend themselves to being adopted for this novel. One may even find it invigorating to allow students the creative license to devise new activities for trial.

STEVEN STOUT
Midlothian Middle School
Chesterfield County

Sharon Harris is former supervisor of English for Albemarle County and current Assistant Principal at Albemarle High School.

Review

D. L. F. and A. P. Nilsen, editors, *WHIMSY II: Humor and Metaphor*, English Department, Arizona State University, 1984. Reviewed by Alan M. McLeod.

As All Fool's Day approaches each year now, we anticipate the annual Western Humor and Irony Membership Conference (WHIM); the fourth such conference will be held March 29-April 1, 1985, at Arizona State University, and will focus on "Humor Across the Disciplines."

The second conference, entitled "Metaphors Be With You: Humor and Metaphor," produced a 320 page book of conference proceedings. Categories of the addresses include American Literature, British Literature, Education, Linguistics, Philosophy, Popular Culture, Visual Metaphors. Metaphors are used to explain or develop stereotypes, to answer questions which have no answers, to enable people to relate to each other, to gain insights into culture. From the opening editorial through the addresses to the boxes illustrating various metaphors, the reader is charged with different emotions and new insights. Humor ranges from the subtle to the outrageous; the reader alternately chuckles and roars at language, culture/society, paradox, individual foible. Humor is not only therapeutic, it helps shape life and living; as Don L. F. Nilsen has said, "You can't have an argument while laughing." A few hours spent with *WHIMSY II* is an effective tonic.

Alan McLeod is Professor of English Education at Virginia Commonwealth University.

ERIC/RCS Report: The New Realism in Children's Literature

Margaret Mar

Living happily ever after is not, after all, inevitable. When Louise Fitzhugh suggested just that in her 1964 publication of *Harriet the Spy*, she rocked the sugary world of the children's story. Since then, a steady and increasing stream of writers has undermined axioms familiar to children's literature—being good brings happiness, all suffering has a purpose, love can solve any problem—until today, as McClenathan argues, "The movement to protect children in their literature from —life's tragedies is over, doubtless forever." Contemporary literature for children confronts problems never suggested in the idyllic family life of The Moffats. Divorce, poverty, racism and old age are frequent concerns, not only in adolescent and intermediate fiction, but also in books for the very young. Called the "new realism," this trend has expanded the content of children's literature to include once taboo subjects. *Trying Hard to Hear You*, for example, is one of several recent books for teenagers exploring the problems of being homosexual in a straight world.

Despite its undoubted impact and its enthusiastic acceptance by children and educators alike, the new realism has not escaped criticism. The frequently bleak picture of life it presents has been attacked for being as one-dimensional as the sentimental view it avoids. In adhering to the grimmest of reality, critics say, it fails to suggest the possibility for change. Debate over the new realism at once raises larger questions about the purpose of children's literature and the nature of the literary experience and poses specific problems for the elementary and secondary school teacher. Trying to incorporate literature into the curriculum or select books for bibliotherapy, the teacher is faced with the difficult tasks of evaluating the new realism and finding methods to use it most effectively in the classroom. For such a teacher the question may not be how much new realism to insert in the literature program, but how to guide students' response to it. The following ERIC resources may help in these efforts.

Greater Truthfulness. Much of the controversy over the new realism concerns the impact its frequently sad or ambiguous endings have on young readers. Roggenbuck believes that for young adults, at least, the influence is positive. While recognizing that these resolutions, so different from earlier fiction's inevitably hopeful ones, can leave readers "dangling," Roggenbuck feels that they also reflect more accurately the experiences of young people today. Teenagers who have problems with drugs or crime, or who have witnessed their families break up through divorce, will not accept books offering simple solutions to serious problems. Thus, Roggenbuck sees ambiguous conclusions as potential strengths, engaging teenagers through the truthfulness of their presentation. In *A Hero Ain't Nothin' But a Sandwich*, for example, whether the main character will really act on his decision to seek treatment for drug addiction is never revealed. Avoiding the "pat ending," Roggenbuck feels, highlights the great difficulty drug addicts face in rehabilitation, and keeps the story "true to life."

Teenagers, Roggenbuck believes, will find that the works of "new realism" mirror their lives in characterization as well as in plot resolution. Adolescent literature in the past generally described only America's success story, but today it reflects the experience of the large group of teenagers who are not white, middle class and college bound.

The widening of the range of characters in the novels to include more ethnic and racial minorities has made it possible for more

students to find books with heroes and heroines that will mirror themselves and their words.

Along with Roggenbuck, Snyder suggests that the liberalization of content and treatment of issues, and the inclusion of a broader range of social and ethnic groups in its characterization, has produced a fiction that comes nearer reality as young readers know it. More than offering the opportunity to "see themselves," Snyder believes that the new realism answers children's great need to understand: "Contemporary books dealing with serious subjects allow children to look at the basic ills of our time. Most kids already know all about them." After all, Snyder says, "Young people are not as frightened of reality as some adults think. They are more frightened by whispered half-truths."

Hopelessness vs Hope. While not denying its emphatic quality, Carr finds that the "tell-it-like-it-is" school is itself a product of half-truths: "Victory must always share the battlefield with defeat. Hope must conquer, or be conquered by, hopelessness." In focusing exclusively on defeat and hopelessness, Carr believes that the new realism ignores this duality of experience, offering instead "single-edged themes that create depressing reading for our children." One of several examples of unflinching hopelessness she presents, *The Mimosa Tree* (Cleaver, 1970), is the story of a poor North Carolina family who move to Chicago in hopes of a better life. Rushing from one violent scene to another—a mattress bloody from a murder, a boy pushing his mother under a bus, a child dying from an epileptic fit—the book is fascinating reading; yet as the Proffitt family, having failed at life in the Chicago slum, retreats to North Carolina with another "false vision of immediately better times," Carr finds that "the reader is filled with utter hopelessness." Unlike Roggenbuck, Carr argues that it is not enough for literature to present a realistic "slice of life." It must provide "an opportunity for the reader to become involved with the issues presented and to view their problems and possible solutions from many different angles." Too many recent books, Carr feels, encourage in students a passivity, a fatalistic acceptance of life as it is.

Violence in Picture Books. According to Karen Harris, the portrayal of unchecked aggression or cruelty is a special problem in picture books, less because it ignores the potential for positive action than because it shows young children a picture of "the world out of control." Contradictions between the text and its illustrations complicate the problem. For example, the plot of Fitzhugh and Scoppettone's *Bang, Bang, You're Dead,* describing how two groups of children learn to play together amicably, shows its young readers the value of peaceful settlements to problems. The thirty pictures of gory, battling children, however, filling almost one-third of the book, communicate quite a different message. Fighting, it seems, is exciting, fun, important, though perhaps it isn't nice to say so. In Keeping's *Through the Window,* Harris states, "What is significant . . . is not so much the violence, [as] the main character's response to it." Having watched from his window as a little dog was trampled to death by horses, Joseph sees the owner sadly scoop the pet up in her arms. Breathing on the glass, he draws stick figures of the woman and her dog. Both, according to Harris, are "grinning from ear to ear." Is Joseph's drawing a denial of a sad event, a means of overcoming his sorrow, or a sign of his happiness at the dog's death? How are young readers to interpret this disturbing act? Though textual ambiguity may stimulate a more complex understanding in older readers, Harris believes that the unexplained emphasis on violence in many recent picture books only confuses very young children.

Metaphors for Death. Also frequently confusing, Delisle and McNamee suggest, is the treatment of death in new picture books. The authors cite research indicating that children move through three general stages in their developing understanding of death: between three and five, dominated by what Piaget calls magical thinking, children see death as sad but temporary, an experience always affecting others; from six to eight they become concrete thinkers, fascinated by the details of dying but not yet generalizing the effects to everyone; around nine and ten, as they approach abstract thinking, children realize that death is both permanent and inevitable, even for themselves. If this time frame is correct, Delisle and McNamee say, books dealing with death through metaphor are frequently aimed at children incapable of abstract thinking. In Miles's *Annie and the Old One*, for example, Annie comes to accept her grandmother's approaching death after she sees that the old one's life is like the rug she weaves—it has a beginning and an end, and makes room, on its completion, for others to follow it. Though perhaps inspiring to adults, these authors doubt that the metaphor can be understood by seven- and nine-year olds, its intended audience. Children in the preabstract thinking stage are more likely to appreciate the practical orientation of Margaret Wise Brown's *The Dead Bird*. Finding a dead bird in the grass, a group of young children stop their play to examine it, curious to see what death is like. Feeling very sad, they decide to give the bird a funeral.

Afterward, they all visit the grave for awhile, "until they forget," and return to their play. *The Dead Bird* presents the process of grief and reconciliation in matter-of-fact, yet sympathetic terms, terms its young audiences can readily understand.

Literature's Effect. The controversy over the new realism reveals two major approaches to literature. Those valuing the new trend for its increased truthfulness find literature's main force in its ability to capture life. By mirroring the experiences of its readers, they suggest, literature inspires interest, sympathy, and understanding. The new realism's critics, on the other hand, state that in its grimness the movement discourages readers from acting for change. They see literature as more obviously ethical in nature. To view literature as either a mirror or a catalyst, however, is to oversimplify it.

Literary critic Georg Lukacs also believes that literature exerts a largely ethical influence on its readers. But, as Lukac's reviewer, Peterson, suggests, this "does not mean that literature seeks to interfere with [people's] practical li[ves] by giving sermons, moral codes, or object lessons. . . . It does not itself solve any of the reader[s'] problems, complex or simple, personal or social." Instead, the moving experiences in realistic fiction exert "a broadly humanizing influence," expanding readers' views of self and world:

> *The literary effect changes the whole being of everyday life into one with a sense of human wholeness by forcing onto readers a new world. . .with new or freshly seen contents, and by making readers capable of taking in this world with rejuvenated senses and thinking.*

Although the effect is only temporary, good books, Lukacs states, produce "moral readiness," a heightened attention, a more imaginative response to life.

Like Lukacs, Sloan believes that the imaginative power of literature lies in its ability to at once face reality and move beyond it:

> *Literature is the journal of man's quest for his human identity. It has everything to do with people, young and old—their actions, their needs and desires. Great stories and poems do not shrink from showing us both sides of the coin: What it is to be human and what it means to be inhumane. Inside a story we can walk for a*

> *time wearing someone else's shoes, seeing as he saw or feeling as she felt. We can travel to faraway places; we can live for a time in the past or the future. In imaginative literature are created new worlds—of possibilities and choices—that put us in touch with our own imaginative worlds.*

But how, Sloan asks, can teachers encourage and educate the imagination? While attentive to the therapeutic value and the insights, social or moral, offered by good fiction, teachers must present literature to children as an art. Among other suggestions for increasing student appreciation, Sloan lists questions designed to help students discover what literature is and how it works. Predictive questions, such as "If the story took place somewhere else or in a different time, how would it be changed?" or "Suppose the order of events were changed. What would happen to the story? Would it be a new story or not story at all?" shift readers attention from specific content to underlying patterns and relationships. Analytic questions, such as "What does the author do to create suspense, to make you want to read on to find out what happens?" move students from their personal response to an understanding of how literature inspires that response.

In giving students the tools to evaluate realistic fiction, teachers not only encourage a fuller appreciation of literature, but also help prevent what critics feel is the major danger of the new realism—the uncritical acceptance of a distorted picture of reality. In addition to the materials cited, the ERIC system contains a number of documents that deal with the new realism and ways of presenting it in the classroom. These may be found by consulting monthly issues of *Resources In Education* (RIE) and the *Current Index to Journals in Education* (CIJE) under the headings "Children's Literature," and "Literature Appreciation."

References

Carr, Robin L. "From Pandora's Box: Hopelessness and Defeat in Children's Literature." 1978. 10 pp. [ED 168 026]

Chapman, Diane L. "The New Look of Children's Picture Books." International Reading Association, St. Louis, Missouri, May 5-9, 1980. 29 pp. [ED 189 607]

Delisle, Robert G. and Abigail S. Woods McNamee. "Children's Perceptions of Death: A Look at the Appropriateness of Selected Picture Books." 1977. 20 pp. [ED 173 786]

Harris, Karen. "Themes of Violence in Picture Books." New York State English Council, Binghamton, New York, May 1974. 8 pp. [ED 090 584]

McClenathan, DayAnn. "Tragic Themes in Children's Books: How Universal Themes of Death and Deprivation are Dealt with in Children's Books Today." International Reading Association World Congress on Reading, Hamburg, Germany, August 1-3, 1978. 24 pp. [ED 163 418]

Peterson, Gordon. "George Lukacs: His Ideas about Literature and Their Implications for Teaching Children's Literature." 1979. 18 pp. [ED 204 747, microfiche only]

Roggenbuck, Mary Jane. "Young Adult Books are Changing to Reflect Realities." Focus on Literature for Children and Young Adults. Victor H. Jones, Ed. 1977. 47 pp. [ED 144 095]

Sloan, Glenna Davis. "Can Literature be Taught?" Language Arts in the Elementary School, Phoenix, Arizona, April 22-24, 1977. 15 pp. [ED 147 817]

Snyder, Anne. "Realistic Fiction for Youth." International Reading Association, Houston, Texas, May 1-5, 1978. 13 pp. [ED 157 050]

(Continued from page 11)

The study of literature is equally important. Literature enriches and broadens the experience of life. It plays a significant role in learning to use language well. By studying literature people learn how idaes, emotions, and moral commitments have been fused in language. By learning to analyze and interpret the language of literature they learn to deal with ambiguity and to remain wary of answers that close off the possibility of discussion. Learning how to interpret complex, emotionally intense literary works enables them to improve their own writing and helps them interpret the various form of communication they encounter in their daily lives.

Learning to interpret literature is a key link between functional literacy and the highest intellectual purposes of learning.

2. *So much excellent literature exists that different schools may reasonably make different selections of literature for their students.* Many reports raise the question of what students should read. A number suggest the importance of establishing a common body of literature.

Students should read works that help them define and understand their own values and experiences and those of others. All students should read widely in the literatures from their own cultures and regions, from the pluralistic American experience, and from the world at large.

3. *Small classes are necessary for effective language learning.* While some reports call for better teaching, few acknowledge the need for small English classes.

Students learn effective writing and critical reading best through practice. When they write, they need frequent opportunities to go over their work with classmates and teachers. When they read, they must have enough time to discuss literature with the teacher individually or in small groups. To promote learning, teachers must respond to individual variations in their students' development. Effective language learning requires coaching by mature, well educated teachers. Such coaching requires small classes.

4. *Achievement in English cannot be evaluated adequately by mass testing.* Many of the reports accept data from mass testing programs as justification for their recommendations.

Some achievements may be partially measured by mass testing. But the use of language is a complex activity; it can be evaluated only by frequent observation of real performances of reading and writing.

Teaching and learning are also complex activities that cannot be evaluated simplistically. Even test publishers explicitly warn against misusing test scores as measures of effective programs, courses, or teachers. Relying on mass testing inevitably leads to programs oriented toward test scores rather than educational goals.

5. *Teachers must have support to continue their growth as professionals.* Some reports point out that communication among English teachers across grade levels and institutions remains inadequate, but few reports suggest remedies.

Overcoming the isolation of teachers requires that they have more time and additional opportunities to discuss their work with colleagues and to continue their studies. Although professional organizations strive to provide adequate forums, teachers need more encouragement and support from their administrators and communities to participate in such forums in their pursuit of excellence in teaching.

As representatives of national associations of those who study and teach English, we welcome the dialogue now taking place among parents, educators, and community leaders. We invite responses to this statement and intend to prepare more extensive explanations of these principles and others of concern to the public and the profession. We see these exchanges as opportunities to work together and to enhance the quality of instruction we offer our students.

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Founded 1914

1984 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President: JUDY SELF, *Virginia Department of Education, Radford*

President-Elect: JACQUELYN BRYANT, *Virginia Beach Schools, Virginia Beach*

Executive Secretary: LEON F. WILLIAMS, *Roanoke County Schools, 5556 McVitty Road, Roanoke 24018*

Treasurer: STEVEN FAIRCHILD, *James Madison University, Harrisonburg*

Secretary: CHARLOTTE SELLERS, *Blacksburg High, Blacksburg*

Members-at-Large: HELEN KELLEY, *Virginia Department of Education;* CHERI BURTON, *Roanoke County Schools;* BERT CARR, *Hampton City Schools;* PAMELA GAY, *Old Dominion University*

Past-President: ANNE A. KUHTA, *Fairfax County Schools, Fairfax*

Liaison Officers: NCTE—ANAMAE HILL, *Henrico County Schools, Highland Springs 23075; VCEE*—PATRICIA KELLY, *Virginia Tech, Blacksburg 24061; VSRA*—PATRICIA DUNCAN, *Virginia Commonwealth, Richmond 23284; SLATE*—GARLAND WESSON, *Kecoughton High, Hampton 23669*

Publications: Editor—VIRGINIA ENGLISH BULLETIN, ALAN M. MCLEOD, *Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond 23284; Editor*—NEEDLE'S EYE, BETH BOONE *and* BILLIE BELL, *Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond 23284; Business Manager,* JOHN S. OEHLER, *Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond 23284*

AFFILIATE PRESIDENTS

BATE: BERT CARR, *Phoebus High, Hampton 23663*
CATE: EILEEN FORD, *(contact), Chesterfield 23181*
DATE: ROSEMARY BALGAVY, *Stratford High, Fredericksburg 22401*
DETA: MARIE MANIEGO, *Petersburg High, Petersburg 23803*
EATE: PAUL BRUMFIELD, *Tunstall High, Dry Fork 24549*
ETA-NV: JOAN LAWSON, *Groveton High, Alexandria 22309*
FATE: ANNE JOHNSON, *Heritage High, Lynchburg 24502*
GATE: RITA KASLOW, *James Madison University, Harrisonburg 22804*
IATE: HOWARD CROUCH, *Richlands High, Richlands 24641*
JATE: MALLORY LOEHR, *Albemarle County Schools, Charlottesville 22901*
LATE: DIAHN SIMONINI, *Buckingham High, Buckingham 23921*
MATE: BERNIE STEINBACH, *1411 Crestview Dr., Blacksburg 24061*
NATE: THERESA MANCHEY, *James Wood High, Winchester 22601*
OATE: DOLLY DOWELL, *Ervinton High, Nora 24272*
PATE: LOUISE PATTERSON, *Patrick Henry High, Roanoke 24015*
QATE: MILLIE DAVIS, *J-H-W High (Wythe Bldg.), Richmond 23225*
TATE-L: ANNA M. TAGR, *Granby High, Norfolk 23505*
TATE-T: WILLIAM TROTTER, *Deep Creek Jr., Chesapeake 23323*
V-BATE: BETTY HUTCHKIN, *540 King Arthur Dr., Virginia Beach 23464*
WATE: EVELYN TURNER, *Northampton High, Eastville 23347*

WINTER, 1984

Baxter, Judy. Control in Adolescent Literature, p. 18.

Britain, Mary. Book Review, p. 3.

Burnett, Elizabeth. Introduction to Faulkner, p. 12.

Bolde, David. War Literature, p. 52.

Duke, Charles. Teaching Literature, p. 24.

Fisher, Ruth. See Robert Small

Gross, Ena. Mathematics in Literature, p. 37.

Harris, Sharon. Great Teaching Ideas, p. 56.

Hibbison, Eric. *A Farewell to Arms*, p. 40.

Mahoney, Kathleen. Virginia Locales, p. 54.

McLeod, Alan. Book Review, p. 59.

_____. Two Stacks Later: Literature, p. 2.

Mier, Margaret. New Realism in Children's Literature, p. 60.

Segedy, Michael. Teaching Poetry, p. 47.

Small, Robert and Ruth Fisher. Research: Response to Literature, p. 4.

Starrett, Gayle. Power of a Good Book, p. 10.

Swope, John. Aesthetic Experiences, p. 44.

Thompson, Edgar. Metaphor, p. 30.

Wood, Emily. Fantasy and Science Fiction, p. 51.

Worthington, Pepper. The *Alice* Books, p. 39.

Great English Teaching Ideas:

- Mary Burman, p. 57.
- Ray Goss, p. 58.
- Nancy Miller, p. 58.
- Betsy Murray, p. 58.
- Michael Segedy, p. 58.
- Steven Stout, p. 59.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE